

PERSUASION AND ATHLETE ENDORSEMENTS: THE INFLUENCE OF
ADVERTISING APPEALS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF THE
ADVERTISEMENT, ENDORSER, AND BRAND

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The use of athlete and celebrity endorsements is an effective marketing strategy for companies attempting to break through the advertising clutter and increase the visibility of their brands. Unfortunately, much of the research on celebrity endorsements has focused on how celebrities influence consumer attitudes and behaviors toward the brand. Consequently, little attention has been paid to the influence of advertising on consumer perceptions of the endorser. This is a potentially problematic omission because evidence has suggested that advertising content plays an important role in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors toward advertisements and brands. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the advertisement, endorser, and brand. A secondary purpose was to assess the influence of emotions on consumer perceptions of the endorser and the mediating role of emotions between advertising content and attitude toward the ad.

The study featured a 4 (appeal type: humorous vs. inspirational vs. warm vs. rational appeal) x 2 (athlete endorser vs. non-athlete endorser) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental conditions and were asked to watch a television commercial produced by the Nike brand. The hypotheses were tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA), multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), multiple regression, and multivariate multiple regression.

The results revealed that athlete endorsed ads containing warm appeals are more effective in general, than all other appeals. Further, the results suggested that marketers

are capable of augmenting an endorser's image via advertising and other marketing related activities. This study extends the literature by testing the influence of advertising appeals on attitude toward the ad and consumer perceptions of the brand. In addition, this study provides important building blocks in our understanding of emotional dimensions arousal and pleasure and their role in influencing the athlete endorsement process.

DEDICATION

To my father, the first man to hold and protect my heart.
Thank you for always believing in me and for encouraging me to reach my
dreams. You have and will always be my hero.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The use of celebrity endorsements has become a popular, and expensive, marketing strategy for companies attempting to break through advertising clutter and increase brand visibility. It is estimated that approximately 20% of all U.S. television commercials feature celebrities (Crutchfield, 2010; Sager, 2011), and advertisers spend 10% of their budgets on endorsement fees (Till, Stanley, & Priluck, 2008). Companies invest large sums of money in celebrity endorsements because "... celebrities are believed to enhance the subject's attractiveness to the ad, make the copy more memorable, credible, and desirable, and effectively glamorize the product" (Kamins & Gupta, 1994, p. 569-570).

Appearing in 60% of all celebrity endorsed ads, "athletes endorse products more often than any other category of celebrity (i.e., musicians, actors, comedians, etc.)" (Carlson & Donovan, 2008, p. 154); they also command the highest endorsement fees. For example, in 2013, Nike paid Michael Jordan an estimated \$90 million in exchange for his name, image, and product line (Badenhausen, 2014a); Tiger Woods and Roger Federer earned approximately \$65 million each, making them the world's highest paid athlete endorsers (Lawrence, 2013); and the 10 highest paid athlete endorsers earned a collective \$367 million (Lawrence, 2013). Despite the high costs associated with these activities, there are a variety of motives for hiring athletes to endorse products and brands. For example, while Nike paid \$90 million to Michael Jordan, the rights to the

Jordan name generated over \$1 billion in revenue for Nike (Badenhausen, 2014a).

Similarly, when David Beckham became the face of Armani underwear in 2008, sales of boxer briefs rose by 150% (Macht, 2008). By connecting a brand to the image of a professional athlete, a company can benefit from an image association, or what McCracken (1989) termed, meaning transfer. Consistent with this idea, several studies have reported that athletes provide firms with valuable opportunities to enhance their brand image (e.g., Charbonneau & Garland, 2005), brand awareness (e.g., Cianfrone & Zhang, 2006; Van Hoesche, Van Hoesche, De Knop, & Taks, 2000), and brand equity (e.g., Vincent, Hill, & Lee, 2009). Further, previous research has shown that athlete endorsements can positively influence attitudes towards the ad, attitudes towards the brand, and purchase intentions (Braunstein & Zhang, 2005; Carlson & Donovan, 2008; Dix, Phau, & Pougnet, 2010). Given these results, it is not surprising that a significant amount of research has been devoted to developing and understanding the factors influencing the effectiveness of athlete endorsers (e.g., Fink, Cunningham, & Kenix, 2004; Kim & Cheong, 2011; Koernig & Boyd, 2009). As such, the majority of this literature has focused on identifying and measuring the most salient dimensions of the athlete endorser.

More recently, "...endorsement studies have begun to discuss endorsers as independent brands and consider their relationship as 'co-branding' rather than simply endorsees and endorsers" (Arai, Ko, & Ross, 2014, p. 99). This perspective implies that the athlete endorser has a personal stake in the endorsement process (Arai et al., 2014, Seno & Lukas, 2007), and is equally affected by the image of the brand. Seno and Lukas

(2007) noted that "... to the extent that the endorsed product's brand image has certain attributes, for example elegance or professional success, it is plausible that these attributes can be transferred back to the endorsing celebrity" (p. 128). This means that when a professional athlete enters into a relationship with a brand, the brand is capable of augmenting the athlete's image via advertising and other brand-related activities (Seno & Lukas, 2007). As an example, consider the relationship between NFL quarterback, Aaron Rodgers and State Farm Insurance. Although usually described as private and reserved, the athlete has been able to create and reinforce a friendly and positive image by appearing in several humorous ads and associating himself with the trustworthy, likeable brand. Thus, when a professional athlete becomes associated with a brand via the endorsement process, the brand's attributes and the characteristics of the ad (i.e., humor) can transfer to the athlete and have a positive impact on his or her image.

Accordingly, it has become increasingly important for professional athletes to manage their brand relationships and develop strategies to enhance their personal image. As the need for the brand management of professional athletes grows (Arai et al, 2014), a new perspective is needed to understand the influence of the athlete endorser. For example, as a result of professional athletes like LeBron James turning their athletic careers into multi-million dollar brands, it has become increasingly important for professional athletes to portray themselves in a favorable light. This is because, similar to traditional brands (i.e., product and service brands), the long-term success of a professional athlete depends on his or her ability to build and maintain a strong, differentiated brand (Arai et al., 2014). As explained by Arai et al. (2014), "... the

established brand value of the athlete will help his/her post-athletic career because well-branded athletes can leverage their brand value through their post-athletic career” (p. 98). Perhaps it is not surprising then, that well-branded retired athletes such as Muhammad Ali and Jack Nicklaus have continued to earn a significant amount of money from their endorsements (Badenhausen, 2014b). Since the way in which professional athletes are portrayed in advertising may significantly influence their off the field marketability, it is extremely important that they manage their endorsements to ensure their images are properly portrayed (Arai et al., 2014; Shank, 2005). As such, modern athletes have become increasingly aware of maintaining a positive image to protect their brand (Arai et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, research on celebrity endorsements has done little to advance researcher understanding of the advertising strategies that underlie the effects of the athlete endorser. More specifically, little is known about the influence of advertising on consumer perceptions of the endorser, or how such perceptions shape consumer attitudes toward the ad and/or brand. Rather, the majority of work in this area has been oriented toward assessing how celebrities can create brand value (e.g., Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Erdogan, 1999; Kamins, 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; McCracken, 1989; Silvera & Austad, 2004; Till & Busler, 1998). For example, researchers have argued that the most persuasive endorsers are those that embody a rich combination of culturally relevant meanings, which can transfer to brands via advertising cues (McCracken, 1989). This meaning transfer process has suggested that the effectiveness of the endorser rests upon “... the meanings he or she brings to the endorsement”

(McCracken, 1989, p. 389). Consequently, it has been proposed that "... when a consumer identifies with a celebrity (identification occurs when a person is willing to accept influence from another for their own lives), he/she purchases the product in hope of claiming some of these transferred meanings for their own lives" (Amos, et al., 2008, p. 210). In line with this thinking, celebrity endorsement research has focused on the source effects of the endorser, suggesting that the most persuasive celebrities are those who are perceived as possessing high levels of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise (Amos et al., 2008; Erdogan, 1999; Kim & Na, 2007; Ohanian, 1990). These characteristics combine to form the image of the endorser in the mind of consumers (Amos et al., 2008; Batra & Homer, 2004), which means that companies are now selecting celebrities based on the meanings they hope to embody or portray. For this reason, many companies are willing to pay celebrities millions of dollars to leverage their brands.

Statement of the Problem

While there is no denying that celebrities can be persuasive spokespeople for products and brands, much of the research on celebrity endorsements has been conducted from the organizational level-of-analysis. Somewhat surprisingly, little attention has been paid to the influence of advertising on consumer perceptions of the endorser. This is a potentially problematic omission because evidence has suggested that advertising content has a statistically significant effect on consumer attitudes toward advertisements and brands (e.g., Burton & Lichtenstein, 1988; Chung & Zhao, 2003;

Lau-Gesk, & Meyers-Levy, 2009). More specifically, it has been shown that a variety of different advertising appeals can influence consumer responses to ads (Brennan & Binney, 2010; Olney, Holbrook, & Batra, 1991; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005). Defined as “... any message in advertising designed to motivate consumer behavior” (Yu, Paek, & Bae, 2008, p. 461), an appeal is used by marketers to imbue their brand with powerful meanings and value (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999; Zhou & Belk, 2004). Consistent with this thinking, researchers have identified numerous effects among several different types of appeals. For the most part, these effects have been described in terms of rational/informational and emotional appeals. Researchers have suggested that rationally-framed messages work by appealing to consumers’ functional and utilitarian needs, while emotionally-framed appeals motivate consumers by making them feel a certain way about the product or brand (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Not surprisingly, there is much debate about the use and effectiveness of various appeals. Unfortunately, research has yet to investigate the influence of such appeals on the athlete or celebrity endorsement.

Regardless of the advertising strategy employed, there is considerable evidence to suggest that emotions play an intervening role in the relationship between ad content (i.e., appeals) and the effectiveness of the ad (i.e., attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, purchase intentions, etc.) (e.g., Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Jang & Namkung, 2009; Olney et al., 199; Shimp & Stuart, 2004). In addition, empirical data has shown that emotional appeals (positive or negative) elicit stronger emotional responses in consumers than rational appeals (Escalas & Stern, 2003). Unfortunately, however,

limited research has been conducted concerning the mediating effects of emotions on attitudes toward the ad and consumer perceptions of the endorser. This is an issue that warrants further investigation because emotional responses to celebrity endorsed ads may influence the brand image of the endorser. In addition, although researchers have argued that the celebrity endorsement is an appeal in and of itself (Hsu & McDonald, 2002; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989), celebrity endorsers are often used in conjunction with other types of appeals. As such, advertising content and consumer emotions are important, because they may facilitate the transfer of meaning from the advertisement to the endorser and determine whether or not the ad resonates with consumers. Thus far, current research has only focused on the meanings transferred from the endorser to brand (e.g., Batra & Homer, 2004; McCracken, 1989; White, Goddard, & Wilbur, 2009).

From a meaning transfer perspective, the celebrity is effective when he or she possesses meanings that are desired by consumers. Researchers have suggested that symbolic properties of a celebrity endorser are important determinants of the effectiveness of celebrity advertising campaigns (i.e., attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions) (Amos et al., 2008; Batra & Homer, 2004; Erdogan, 1999; McCracken, 1989). Central to this perspective is the idea that an expert, attractive, and/or trustworthy celebrity will enhance consumer attitudes towards the advertisement and brand (Amos et al., 2008). While this may be true, little attention has been paid to the way celebrities are portrayed in advertisements and how this may

impact consumer perceptions of the celebrity, and in turn, the brand. According to McCracken (1986):

Advertising works as a potential method of meaning transfer by bringing the consumer good and a representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement. The creative director of an advertising agency seeks to conjoin these two elements in such a way that the viewer/reader glimpses an essential similarity between them. (p. 74)

Consistent with this thinking, McCracken (1989) suggested that the symbolic properties of the celebrity are passed onto the brand via advertising. The author noted that once a marketing firm has identified a celebrity containing a set of symbolic properties it hopes to transfer onto its brand, it is up to the creative director to ensure that appropriate "... meanings are represented in and manipulated by the advertisement" (p. 314). Given this process, and the preceding discussion, it is reasonable to assume that the creative content embedded in an ad plays an important role in creation of brand meaning. However, research has not examined the potential influence of advertising content on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements and the meanings portrayed by endorsers. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the advertisement, endorser, and brand. A secondary purpose was to assess the influence of emotions on consumer perceptions of the endorser and the mediating role of emotions between advertising content and attitude toward the ad. The results of this study can be used identify the most appropriate or effective advertising strategies and assist professional athletes in managing their personal brand image.

Research Questions

Three overarching research questions were developed to guide the investigation:

(1) what is the influence of advertising on consumers' perceptions of the advertisement, endorser, and brand; (2) how do consumers' emotional responses to advertising influence their attitudes toward the ad and their perceptions of the advertisement, endorser, and brand; and (3) what advertising appeal that includes an athlete endorser is most effective in influencing consumer attitudes toward the endorser, attitudes toward the brand, purchase intentions and intentions to spread positive word of mouth (WOM)?

Significance of the Study

If an athlete fails with a company, it hurts the athlete probably more than the company, because the company can recover by mitigating through other athlete relationships or whatever they want to do. But an athlete has a very finite career span. If they fail with one company, they're not going to get a renewal with that company, and they're not going to be picked up by a competitor. So, it's very important that you look at the athlete piece of the puzzle in a long term framework so that you minimize the risk of failing.

– Phil de Picciotto, *Developing an Athlete Brand*

The current study contributes to the sport marketing literature by providing a better understanding of how and why athletes and brands are impacted by the endorsement process. Recognizing how professional athletes can influence consumer-brand relationships (Carlson & Donovan, 2013), a number of sport management scholars have published athlete endorsement research (e.g., Carlson & Donovan, 2008; Charbonneau & Garland, 2005; Fink et al., 2004; Koernig & Boyd, 2009).

Unfortunately, like much of the work on celebrity endorsements (e.g., Amos et al., 2008;

Erdogan, 1999; Kamins, 1990), these efforts have focused almost exclusively on the athlete-brand fit (e.g., Koernig & Boyd, 1998; Till & Busler, 2000), and the attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of the endorser (e.g., Fink, Parker, Cunningham, & Cuneen, 2012; Braunstein-Minkove, Zhang, & Trail, 2011; Kim & Na, 2007). Given that many athletes are brands in their own right (Arai, Ko, & Kaplanidou, 2013; Arai et al., 2014), research is needed to advance our understanding of athlete endorsements and the factors that may influence consumer perceptions of the athlete. More specifically, research is needed to determine how athlete brands are influenced by advertising strategies and appeals. As illustrated by the quote from sports agent Phil de Picciotto, professional athletes have limited time to invest in their personal brands, which makes it important for them to manage their images and ensure they are portrayed in a desirable light. By identifying the impact of advertising appeals on the endorser, the results of this study can be used to assist professional athletes in taking actions to improve their images and strengthen their personal brands.

In addition to assisting professional athletes in their brand management, the results of this study will extend previous theoretical work on the meaning transfer model and assist marketers in creating more effective advertising campaigns. Although much of the existing research in this area has suggested that meaning is transferred from the celebrity (or athlete) to the brand (Amos et al, 2008; Langmeyer & Walker, 1991; McCracken, 1989), there is evidence to suggest the reverse is also possible (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007). Specifically, research has shown that “... meanings and values can transfer from either partner to the other” (Halonen-Knight

& Hurmerinta, 2010, p. 453). Unfortunately, to date, only a handful studies have addressed the reciprocal effects of meaning transfer (e.g., Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007), and none of these have examined the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the endorser, advertisement, or brand. Since the effectiveness of the endorser depends upon his or her symbolic meanings (McCracken, 1989), it is important for marketers to understand how meaning is created and how to imbue meaning into celebrities and back into their brands. Although there is evidence that meaning can be transferred from ad characteristics to brands, additional research is needed to determine how meaning is created and how advertising affects the endorsement process (Batra & Homer, 2004). Thus, this study aims to fill some of the gaps in the literature by extending the meaning transfer model to include additional factors and determine whether meanings can be passed from the ad to the endorser to the brand.

Finally, this study contributes to the literature by exploring the mediating role of emotions in the relationship between advertising appeals and attitude toward the ad. Although a considerable amount of research has focused on the role of emotions in mediating the effects of advertising (e.g., Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Jang & Namkung, 2009; Olney et al., 1991; Shimp & Stuart, 2004), no parallel research has been conducted in the context of athlete or celebrity endorsements. Consequently, little is known about the emotional responses to athlete endorsed ads or their impact on endorsement effectiveness. By examining the role of emotions in the endorsement

process, this study will provide some guidance in the conduct of future marketing campaigns and will assist marketers in increasing the effectiveness of their endorsers.

Operational Definitions

Celebrity Athlete Endorser: An endorser is defined as “... any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement” (McCracken, 1989, p. 34). Therefore, a celebrity athlete endorser is any professional athlete who lends his or her name, fame, and recognition to a product or brand campaign.

Advertising Appeals: Advertising appeals are the “...specific approaches advertisers use to communicate how their products will satisfy consumer needs” (Zhang & Neelankavil, 1997, p. 137).

Celebrity Attractiveness: In the current study, celebrity attractiveness refers to the physical beauty of the celebrity endorser (Ohanian, 1990). It also represents a dimension of the source credibility model.

Celebrity Likeability: Likeability refers to the “... affection for the source as a result of the source’s physical appearance and behavior” (Erdogan 1999, p. 299). It represents a dimension of the source attractiveness model.

Emotional Appeals: Emotional advertising appeals are advertising strategies designed to elicit emotional responses in consumers (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999).

Emotional Response: An emotional response is defined as the emotions elicited during an ad-exposure. These emotions can take the form of affect, feelings, or attitudes (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989).

Rational Appeals: Rational advertising appeals are strategies designed to inform consumers about the functional attributes of a product or brand (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999).

Source Attractiveness Model: The source attractiveness model refers to the celebrity's likeability, familiarity, and similarity (Amos et al., 2008).

Source Credibility Model: The source credibility of the endorser consists of celebrity expertise, celebrity trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness (Amos et al., 2008).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature regarding athlete endorsements and advertising appeals. The first section introduces the concept of athlete branding and discusses the importance of examining the endorsement from the athlete perspective. The second section presents the theoretical framework informing the study; this includes a discussion of the endorsement process and the nature of meaning transfer. The third section develops hypotheses relating to the association between advertising appeals, emotional responses, athlete and celebrity endorsements, and advertising effects such as attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions. In this section, it is argued that meaning can be transferred from the advertisement, to the athlete, and back to the brand.

Athlete Branding

The pressures and the level of commitment required now by a top athlete to stay at the top of the game are intense, and careers, in most cases, are shortening. Yet the value of an athlete's brand typically increases as an athlete competes at a high level for a longer period of time. So, longevity of athletes is good for everyone: for the fans, the teams and certainly for the athletes.

-Phil de Picciotto, *Sports Business Daily*

Historically, research has focused on branding from a product and service perspective. However, this strategy is no longer sufficient since high profile athletes

have become analogous to traditional brands, which has been characterized by techniques intended to build, promote, and differentiate themselves (e.g., Arai et al., 2013; Arai et al., 2014; Carlson & Donovan, 2013; Thomson, 2006). The shift has occurred because, similar to products and services, human brands are capable of eliciting emotional responses and behaviors (Thomson, 2006). According to Aaker (1991), a brand is a "... distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods from those of competitors" (p. 7). Similarly, an athlete brand refers to one's public persona and the make-up of his or her unique characteristics and traits (Arai et al., 2014). Evidence for this can be seen in the National Basketball League (NBA), where many of the league's top players take advantage of platforms through which they can express their personalities and interact with their fans. Notable athletes such as LeBron James, Derrick Rose, and Kevin Durant have invested significant resources in developing marketing plans to create and communicate meanings associated with their personas and ultimately, to position themselves as brands.

Most of the empirical work on athlete brands has focused on how professional athletes influence consumer behavior (Arai et al., 2014; Carlson & Donovan, 2008; Carlson & Donovan, 2013). The conceptual argument is that when consumers identify with a professional athlete, they are more likely to feel emotionally attached, and in turn, more likely to purchase goods associated with the athlete or the athlete's team (Carlson & Donovan, 2013). Carlson and Donovan (2013) provided empirical support for this

relationship by demonstrating a link between athlete brand personality, athlete identification team identification, and team-related consumption behaviors. The authors found that athletes' brand personality had a direct effect on their perceived distinctiveness and prestige, which also extended to consumer identification with both the athlete and team. The authors explained the results in terms of the social identity theory by noting that "... individuals are more likely to demonstrate their affiliation with an entity when doing so enhances their self-esteem" (p. 204). In line with this thinking, Carlson and Donovan (2013) concluded that consumers are drawn to athletes who are associated with distinctiveness and prestige, because they aspire to embody the same traits. In this sense, athletes who are associated with talent, status, uniqueness, and prestige, can fulfill consumers' achievement and affiliation needs. Thus, it is extremely important for athletes to manage those meanings so that they can carry them to the endorsement and ultimately, transfer them to the product and brand.

Although the concept of athlete branding is relatively new (Arai et al., 2014), professional athletes have been long recognized as valuable organizational assets (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998). Due to their marquee status and "star quality", professional athletes are considered significant marketplace brands. Beyond simply endorsing a product, a star athlete creates and communicates a symbolic meaning to fans. Recognizing the importance of athlete branding, numerous theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain how athlete brands are built (Arai et al., 2013; Arai et al., 2014; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). Recently, for example, Arai et al. (2014) proposed a conceptual model that delineated the athlete brand image. According

to the model, the athlete brand image consists of the athlete's performance (i.e., athletic expertise, competition style, sportsmanship, and rivalry), attractive appearance (i.e., physical appearance, symbol, body fitness), and marketable lifestyle (i.e., life story, role model, and relationship effort). Within each dimension, the authors proposed a set of sub-dimensions, which refer to the athlete's brand associations. Using this model, professional athletes can use these dimensions as guides to determine where their strengths lie and what areas are in need of improvement. As explained by Arai et al. (2014), "by considering an athlete as a brand, athletes should be able to discover more active marketing opportunities rather than waiting for companies' sponsorship offers" (p. 103).

In line with this thinking, an important consideration for professional athletes is determining whether or not their images are properly portrayed. While the endorsement literature has traditionally been used to identify factors influencing the effectiveness of athlete/celebrity endorsers, it is equally important for athletes to identify opportunities which will enhance the images of their personal brands. Moreover, it is imperative that professional athletes use their endorsements to leverage their market power off the field. Further, although it has been argued that the effectiveness of the endorser depends upon his or her perceived image (i.e., attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) (Ohanian, 1991), it may be possible to positively influence the endorser's image via advertising. Thus, the findings from this study will have important implications for professional athletes and their brands.

Theoretical Framework: The Meaning Transfer Model

The meaning transfer model is an anthropological approach to consumption that focuses on the cultural meanings in products and brands and the processes by which these meanings are transferred to consumers (McCracken, 1986; McCracken, 1989). In the context of celebrity endorsements, the model is used to explain how the meanings attributed to celebrities are passed onto products and brands via advertising (McCracken, 1989, p. 313). “This position implies that the celebrity serves the endorsement process by taking on meanings that then carry from ad to ad, and that the celebrity is capable somehow of serving as a site in which meanings cohere” (McCracken, 1989, p. 311). The theory posits that repeated pairings of the two stimuli (i.e., the celebrity and brand) will result in the known properties of the celebrity residing in the unknown properties of the brand (McCracken, 1989). When an associative link is established between the celebrity and the brand, consumers can transfer the meanings into their own lives (Erdogan, 1999; McCracken, 1989). The meaning transfer process is, therefore, considered complete when consumers acquire the symbolic meanings of the brand through consumption (McCracken 1989).

As depicted in Figure A-1, the meaning transfer model can be broken down into three stages. In stage 1, meanings are attached to celebrities based on their roles in television, film, athletics, and/or other careers (McCracken, 1989). According to McCracken (1989), the term “meaning” can be used to refer to a celebrity’s age, gender, social status, lifestyle, or personality. It is suggested that celebrities add value to the transfer process by bringing unique and unambiguous meanings to the endorsement, and

carrying those “... meanings with them from role to role” (McCracken, 1989, p. 316).

As an example, consider the meanings attached to movie actor Daniel Craig. Since taking on the role of James Bond in 2005, the actor has become associated with meanings of sophistication, class, and style. As a result, companies such as Omega, Belvedere Vodka, and Range Rover have used the actor to endorse their brands and capitalize on his “Bond” associations. Based on this and similar examples, it is reasonable to assume that celebrities can accumulate meanings from their careers and the characters they portray in the media. For this reason, it is extremely important for celebrities to portray themselves in a positive light and to build an image that aligns with their professional careers. Likewise, it is equally important for organizations to select celebrities whose images are widely sought after by target consumers (Choi & Rifon, 2007).

In stage 2 of the model, the meanings embodied by the celebrity are transferred to the brand via advertising. From the organization’s perspective, this stage of the meaning transfer process is critical because it determines whether the celebrity is an effective source of meaning and whether or not the celebrity is capable of transferring such meanings to the brand (McCracken, 1989). According to McCracken (1989), this particular stage requires the development of innovative marketing strategies, underpinned by creativity. The author explained that in order to effectively transfer meanings to a brand, the advertiser must fill “... the advertisement with people, objects, contexts, and copy that have the same meanings as the celebrity” (McCracken, 1989, p. 316). For example, if a company hired David Beckham to deliver meanings of

competence, accomplishment, and athletic skill, then the advertising campaign should showcase the athlete's talents on the field and in a context related to soccer. Conversely, if a company hired David Beckham to transfer meanings of sexual appeal, the advertising campaign should contain images of the athlete's appearance and fill the advertisements with objects and copy related to physical attractiveness. Indeed, operating on the appropriate meanings of the celebrity will result in a successful transfer of images and can establish an associative link between celebrities and brands. If all has gone well, the symbolic properties of the endorser will be shared with symbolic properties of the brand (McCracken, 1989).

In the final stage of the model, the meanings contained in celebrities and brands are transferred into the lives of consumers. Generally, this stage occurs through consumption. As explained by McCracken (1989), "... consumers must claim, exchange, care for, and use the consumer good to appropriate its meanings" (p. 317). During this stage of the process, consumers are said to extract the symbolic properties of the consumer good and "... put them to work in the construction of their self-image" (Erdogan, 1999, p. 306). To this end, celebrities are effective endorsers because they help consumers construct their own identities (McCracken, 1989). It is proposed that by taking possession of the symbolic properties of celebrities and brands, consumers undergo a transformation of the self and eventually claim these meanings as their own (McCracken, 1989). From this perspective, celebrities play an important role in the meaning transfer process, because they determine how meanings are assembled into the

consumer's world. The meaning transfer process is complete when consumers embrace celebrity-brand meanings as their own.

Traditionally, it has been suggested that the celebrity endorsement is a one-way, linear process. Central to this perspective is the idea that the celebrity endorser contains a particular set of meanings prior to entering into an agreement with the brand (Choi & Rifon, 2007; McCracken, 1989). To that end, marketers rely on advertising to build an associative link between the celebrity and the brand, thereby transferring the symbolic properties of the endorser via advertising (Till et al., 2008). To test this proposition, Langmeyer and Walker (1991) investigated whether the associations elicited by endorsed brands were identifiably different than those in unendorsed brands. The authors speculated that the presence of a celebrity endorser would elicit a more unique set of associations than that of an unendorsed brand. They argued that due to the linear nature of the meaning transfer model, consumers would be more likely to derive meanings from celebrities and in turn, assign those meanings to endorsed brands. The authors confirmed that the unendorsed brand elicited a wider range of associations than the endorsed brand. In addition, they found that the use of a celebrity resulted in a more focused sample of symbolic meanings and associations. Based on the outcomes of the analysis, they concluded that celebrities are effective endorsers because they contain symbolic properties that can be easily recalled, and easily transferred to brands. Similarly, Batra and Homer (2004) provided evidence that the personality attributes of celebrities are transferred to brands via advertising. The authors conducted an experiment and found that celebrities who were perceived as having sophistication and class strengthened

consumers' beliefs about the brand. Specifically, they showed that the image of the celebrity reinforced consumers' brand beliefs and brand associations. Based on the results, they argued that "... ads can indeed 'transfer cultural meaning' from ad characteristics (such as endorser personality) to brands, even when the personality assertions are not communicated verbally and explicitly" (p. 328).

While a considerable amount of research has focused on the role of the celebrity in the meaning transfer process, more recent research has indicated that the relationship between a celebrity and brand is one of reciprocity (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007). According to Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010), because consumers extract meanings from personal experience, "...the associations transferring resemble a cloud of meanings—fuzzy, unpredictable, and difficult to control" (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010, p. 454). This perspective implies that the associations created between the celebrity and brand are shared in the minds of consumers. In testing the reciprocity of meaning transfer in celebrity endorsements, Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010) collected data from newspapers and media to determine whether the meanings associated with brands can be transferred to endorsers. The authors demonstrated that a close alliance between the brand and endorser can result in a reciprocal effect, whereby meanings are transferred from the celebrity to the brand and from the brand to the endorser. These results provided important implications for the celebrity's credibility and perceived image.

In a similar way, many researchers have approached meaning transfer from a co-branding perspective (Ambroise, Pantin-Sohier, Valette-Florence, & Albert, 2014; Ilicic

& Webster, 2013; Seno & Lukas, 2007), by suggesting the relationship between the celebrity and brand is based on a mutual exchange of meanings. According to Seno and Lukas (2007), "... a celebrity has the potential to affect the brand equity of the endorsed product through augmenting the product's brand image; and a brand has the potential to affect the equity of the endorsing celebrity by way of augmenting the celebrity's image" (p. 124). The authors proposed that as a result of a mutually beneficial relationship between the endorser and the endorsed brand, the endorser's source credibility and source attractiveness would be affected by the advertising efforts of the endorsed brand. To put it another way, both the endorser and brand have the potential to augment the other's image by way of advertising or other types of marketing activities.

Despite limited evidence indicating that meaning transfer is reciprocal, the examples mentioned herein warrant further investigation. While it is not the purpose of this dissertation to test the reciprocity of the meaning transfer model, the limited data show that the symbolic properties of the endorser can be influenced by the brand (Ambroise et al., 2014; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a brand's marketing communications can significantly influence the meanings associated with the celebrity endorser. Although marketers are advised to select endorsers based on their symbolic properties and/or their perceived attractiveness, credibility, and expertise (Amos et al., 2008; Erdogan, 1999; McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990), it is impossible to find a celebrity who is well-received by the entire population. This may be particularly true for professional athletes, who are tied to leagues and teams that may be less popular than competitors. Further, the meaning

associated with professional athletes is derived from their athletic skills (Koo, Ruihley, & Dittmore, 2012), and thus, it may be necessary to use marketing communications to increase the effectiveness of the endorsement and imbue the athletes with positive meanings. As such, this dissertation seeks to extend the model of meaning transfer to consider the effects of marketing communications on the symbolic properties of the endorser.

Hypothesis Development

Advertising Appeals

Although previous research has not addressed the effect of advertising on consumers' perceptions of athlete or celebrity endorsements, there is considerable evidence to suggest that advertising plays an important role in shaping the attitudes of consumers (Batra & Ray, 1986; Olney, et al., 1991). Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra (1999) noted that advertising is a tool that can be used to communicate meanings associated with a brand, which is the cornerstone for differentiation. Generally, this is accomplished through the use of specific advertising strategies, or various advertising appeals. Advertising appeals are defined as the "... specific approaches advertisers use to communicate how their products will satisfy consumer needs" (Zhang & Neelankavil, 1997, p. 137). Advertising appeals aim to evoke positive responses to ultimately satisfy consumer's psychological needs (Belch & Belch, 2003). To illustrate, consider the advertising campaign for Beats by Dre headphones. In appealing to consumers, the brand consistently uses emotional and inspirational appeals, and leverages its

associations with professional athletes to create commercials that inspire consumers to “block out the noise” and take their game to the next level. The advertising strategy implemented by Beats has allowed the brand to establish and reinforce its associations and create favorable images for the end user. Because brand associations “... contain the meaning of the brand for consumers” (Keller, 1993, p. 3), it is imperative for advertisers to select appeals which resonate with the target market and have the ability to infuse meaning into brands.

Over the years, researchers have examined several different types of advertising appeals. These appeals are broadly categorized as rational/informational appeals (i.e., functional, utilitarian) and emotional appeals (i.e., humor, warmth, symbolic, image, fear, guilt) (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). According to Albers-Miller and Stafford (1999):

Rational advertising stems from the traditional information processing models of decision making where the consumer is believed to make logical and rational decisions; such approaches are designed to change the message receiver’s beliefs about the advertised brand and rely on their persuasive power of arguments or reasons about brand attributes. (p. 42)

Unlike other creative styles, rational advertising works by reinforcing brand associations that appeal to the functional needs of consumers (Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor, 2010). Consequently, marketers have used rational advertising as a means to promote their superiority over other brands. For example, Verizon Wireless targeted AT&T in a comparative ad campaign that included images of the firms’ coverage maps. In an effort to inform consumers about their superior service, the advertising campaign focused on the brand’s functional attributes and its ability to provide service in almost

every part of the United States. Thus, a rational advertising strategy is effective when consumers purchase goods based on their practical needs, and when arguments are needed to influence their purchasing behaviors (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999; Okazaki et al., 2010).

Conversely, emotional advertising is a feeling-based communication style, which is particularly well-suited to evoke emotional responses from consumers (Goossens, 2000; Olney et al., 1991; Williams & Aaker, 2002). While a number of different advertising appeals are capable of evoking emotional responses, emotional advertising works by conveying symbolic meanings inherent in brands and by focusing on the experiential nature of consumption behavior (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999).

Advertising such as Budweiser's "Lost Dog" is an example of this type of appeal. Set to a cover of "I'm Gonna Be (500 miles)" by the Proclaimers, the advertisement follows the journey of a Golden Labrador puppy who was separated from his best friend—a Clydesdale horse (Stamper, 2015). When the horse senses his friend is in trouble, he and three other horses break out of the barn to save the puppy from a wild coyote. At the commercial's end, the owner is reunited with his animals, and he is seen drinking a Budweiser beer as he sits with them in a barn. The purpose of this emotionally charged advertisement was to make consumers feel good about the brand. For the most part, the effects of emotional advertising are generally positive, however, research has found that emotional appeals such as anger, fear, and guilt may stimulate negative responses (Cotte, Coulter, & Moore, 2005; Coulter & Pinto, 1995). Given that the focus on this

dissertation is on the use and effects of positive emotional appeals, the rest of this discussion will focus on related topics.

Positive emotional appeals include affective stimuli such as warmth, humor, love, affection, pride, joy, and inspiration (Batra & Ray, 1986; Faseur & Geunes, 2006; Mai & Schoeller, 2009). Whereas rational advertising encourages consumers to “think” a certain way about the brand, emotional advertising is used to elicit “feelings”. Ad campaigns such as Proctor and Gamble’s “Best Job” is an example of this type of emotional advertising. The campaign struck an emotional chord with consumers by celebrating moms across the world. The campaign starred four moms of Olympians and highlighted the sacrifices they made to empower their children. The ad did not feature any of Proctor and Gamble’s products; rather, the ad focused on engendering consumer emotions and generating positive feelings about the company.

Over the years, there has been much debate regarding the effectiveness of different advertising appeals. On one hand, researchers have argued that rational appeals are more effective in creating positive attitudes towards advertisements and brands (e.g., Drossos, Giaglis, Lekakos, Kokkinaki, & Stavraki, 2007; Golden & Johnson, 1983). For example, in comparing the effectiveness of rational and emotional appeals, Aaker and Norris (1982) found that consumers are more receptive to rationally-framed ads. Similarly, Dröge (1989) reported that informative ads (i.e., comparative ads) lead to more positive attitudes towards advertisements and in turn, more positive attitudes towards brands. It has also been found that rational/informational appeals can influence purchase intentions (Drossos et al., 2007; Golden & Johnson, 1983; Stafford & Day,

1995). Golden and Johnson (1983) concluded that “thinking” (i.e., rational/informational) ads create higher purchase intentions because they are perceived as more likeable and more believable than “feeling” (i.e., emotional) ads. In line with this thinking, some researchers have demonstrated a clear link between rational/informational appeals and the perceived credibility or believability of the ad (Okazaki et al., 2010; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005). Yoo and MacInnis (2005) maintained that “... the more credible the ad execution is, the stronger consumers’ beliefs about the brand are likely to be” (p. 1400).

Other researchers engaged in this debate have contended that emotional appeals are more effective in stimulating positive consumer responses (e.g., Batra & Ray, 1986; Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2010; Eckler & Bolls, 2011; Escalas & Stern, 2003; Janssens & De Pelsmacker, 2005; Okazaki et al., 2010). The idea is that, the emotions evoked by emotionally charged ads will become stored in memory and will become linked to a consumer’s associative network. According to Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer (1999), “... a person’s emotional state can influence various aspects of information processing including encoding and retrieval of information, different strategies used to process information, evaluations and judgments, and creative thinking” (p. 195). Similarly, Calder (1989) noted that previously experienced emotions are stored as nodes and “...may be associated with cognitive concepts and with other emotional concepts” (p. 280). Thus, a brand can be characterized by a set of nodes or associations that include emotions evoked by advertising and other related emotional concepts. This is important for marketers, because although other types of advertising strategies are effective at

building associations, emotional appeals may have a stronger influence on memory and recall (Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2010; Eckler & Bolls, 2011; Janssens & De Pelsmacker, 2005; Mai & Schoeller, 2009), and may ultimately be more effective at motivating consumer decisions (Okazaki et al., 2010). It must be noted, however, that emotions are only capable of influencing consumer behavior if there is a relation between the emotion and mental perception (Calder, 1989, p. 282).

For example, Mai and Schoeller (2009) found that consumers who were exposed to positive emotional appeals were more likely to experience positive emotions and in turn, more positive attitudes toward the ad. Similarly, in a content analysis of 362 Super Bowl ads, Kelley and Turley (2004) provided evidence that advertisements containing emotional appeals had a significant impact on consumer affect towards the ads. In addition, the authors showed that Ad Meter scores were significantly higher for emotional appeals as compared to rational appeals. The argument is that the use of positive emotional appeals promotes positive emotional responses in consumers and in turn, more positive attitudes towards advertisements and brands (Mai & Schoeller, 2009). In the context of viral advertising, Eckler and Bolls (2011) demonstrated that consumers were more likely to send video ads to their friends when they contained positive and emotional tones. The authors found that the use of “affective” appeals (i.e., pleasant) elicited affective responses in consumers, and had a positive effect on consumer attitudes towards the ad. While previous research has shown that negatively-framed appeals (i.e., anger, fear, and guilt) can elicit negative responses from consumers (e.g., Brennan & Binney, 2010; Coulter & Pinto, 1995; Shimp & Stuart, 2004), there is

considerable evidence to suggest that positively framed-appeals (i.e., happiness, joy, and inspiration) are effective in facilitating positive attitudes toward the advertisement and brand (e.g., Aaker & Williams, 1998; Goossens, 2000; Kelley & Turley, 2004; Mai & Schoeller, 2009).

In related vein, researchers have shown that the presence of a celebrity can trigger positive emotions in consumers (Stallen et al., 2010; Thomson, 2006). Stallen et al. (2010) explained that because celebrities tend to be more arousing and likeable than non-celebrity endorsers, they often evoke positive emotions. Similarly, Thomson (2006) argued that the effectiveness of the celebrity endorser is dependent upon the strength of consumer emotional attachments to the human brand (i.e., celebrities). Taken together, these studies indicate that the mere exposure to a celebrity may elicit favorable emotional responses from consumers. In other words, this means that celebrities are capable of generating emotional reactions even when they are not paired with favorable stimuli (i.e., positive images, humor, etc.) (Till, et al., 2008). Given this and the preceding discussion, it is reasonable to believe that when combined with emotional appeals, celebrity endorsement ads may be particularly effective at eliciting positive emotional responses. In accordance with this idea, researchers have found that pairing a celebrity with favorable stimuli results more positive feelings towards the ad and brand (Till et al., 2008). Likewise, a considerable amount of research has shown that celebrities are negatively affected when they are paired with negative information or inappropriate products (Goddard et al., 2009; Till et al., 2008; Till & Shimp, 1998). Thus, the evidence presented here suggests that when exposed to athlete endorsed ads with emotional

appeals, consumers may experience more intense emotions than they would when exposed to rational appeals.

Although there is no systematic study examining the prevalence of appeals in athlete endorsement ads, researchers have suggested that some of the most common types of emotional appeals are those “... based on the psychological states or feelings directed to the self (such as pleasure or excitement), as well those with more social orientation (such as status or recognition)” (Belch & Belch, 2003, p. 269). This is consistent with a recent industry report indicating that consumers prefer universal/basic appeals such as humor, aspiration (i.e., inspiration), and sentiment (Nielsen, 2013). Although some of these appeals have not been thoroughly investigated, there is evidence to suggest that messages containing humor, warmth, and inspiration are designed to evoke positive emotions in consumers and influence behavior (i.e., Eisend, 2009; Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 1998; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Given this, and the fact that many athlete endorsed ads include elements of humor, inspiration, and/or sentiment/warmth, the current study will investigate these appeals.

Humor

Previous research has indicated that ads containing humor attract consumers’ attention and positively influence their attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and affective responses (Eisend, 2009; Gelb & Pickett, 1983; Strick, Hollard, van Baaren, & van Knippenberg, 2009). Gulas and Weinberger (2006) identified the immediate effects of humor as mirth, “... a generic positive (or affective) response that can be gayety, merriment, laughter, amusement, cheer, grins, happiness, fun, pleasure,

lightheartedness, and so on” (p. 37). In support of this idea, Jin and Villegas (2007) found that consumers exposed to product placements in humorous movie scenes experienced more intense feelings of pleasure and arousal than consumers exposed to product placements in non-humorous scenes. Similarly, research has shown that humorous ads lead to more affective responses in consumers, and in turn, more positive attitudes toward the brand, the ad, and intentions to purchase goods (Cline, Altsech, & Kellaris, 2003; Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 1998; Strick et al., 2009). Most notably, previous research has indicated that humor has a positive impact on source liking and the liking of the ad (Eisend, 2009; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). For example, Nabi, Moyer-Guse, and Byrne (2007) demonstrated that the message source of a humorous ad is perceived as more likeable, pleasant, and friendly than the source of a non-humorous ad. In addition, the authors found that source liking played a mediating role in the relationship between humor and the perceived credibility of the ad. Since positive emotional responses also enhance consumers’ thoughts about the credibility of the ad (Yoo & MacInnis, 2005), it is reasonable to believe that such emotions will transfer to consumers’ perceptions of the endorser (i.e., attractiveness and credibility). Thus, taken together, the results of these studies imply that advertisements employing athlete endorsements and humorous appeals should positively influence consumers’ emotions, as well as their perceptions of the endorser. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Participants will experience significantly higher levels of pleasure when exposed athlete endorsed ads with humorous versus rational appeals.

H2a: Participants will experience significantly higher levels of arousal when exposed to athlete endorsed ads with humorous versus rational appeals.

H3a: Participants will have more favorable perceptions (i.e., attractiveness, likeability trustworthiness, and expertise) of the athlete endorser when exposed to athlete endorsed ads with humorous versus rational appeals.

Warmth

As previously noted, emotional appeals are designed to evoke affective reactions in consumers. Accordingly, previous research has shown that warm advertisements can positively influence consumers' attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, recall, and purchase intentions (e.g., Aaker, Stayman, & Hagerty, 1986; Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 1998). Aaker et al. (1986) noted that advertisements associated with warmth can be described as "... sentimental/family-kids/friends-feelings/feel-good-about-yourself creative approaches" (p. 366). Likewise, researchers have suggested that warm advertisements highlight the relationships between social objects such as people, animals, children, and group organizations (Aaker et al., 1986; Machleit & Wilson, 1988; Yelkur, Tomkovick, Hofer, & Rozumalski, 2013).

Although a number of different techniques have been used to assess feelings of warmth contained in, and induced by ads, there seems to be a consensus among researchers that warmth is accompanied by positive valence and feelings of pleasure (Aaker et al., 1986; Chiou, 2002; Faseur & Geuens, 2006). For example, some researchers have suggested that advertising appeals containing warmth and nostalgia are characterized as extremely pleasant and positively related to emotional dimensions of pleasure or the likability of an ad (Faseur & Geuens, 2006; Poels & Dewitte, 2008). Similarly, a number of studies have shown that consumers respond more favorably to

advertisements containing warm appeals (e.g., Faseur & Geuens, 2006; Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 1998). Since affective appeals elicit positive emotions that are eventually transferred to advertisements and brands (Belch & Belch, 2003), it is reasonable to assume that the pleasure induced by exposure to warm ads will transfer to athlete endorsers. Further evidence for this can be drawn from the celebrity endorsement literature which has demonstrated that a "... direct affect transfer can occur using celebrities via conditioning" (Till et al., 2008, p. 179). This means that pairing an athlete endorser with favorable/warm stimuli may result in more positive perceptions of the ad and in turn, more positive perceptions of the endorser. While limited research has investigated the relationship between warmth and arousal (e.g., Aaker et al., 1986), researchers have identified a strong linear relationship between pleasure and arousal (Poels & Dewitte, 2008). In addition, some studies have shown that entertaining and pleasurable ads have a positive impact on feelings of arousal (e.g., Hyun, Kim, & Lee, 2011; Sundar & Kalyanaraman, 2004). Based on this and the preceding arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1b: Participants will experience significantly higher levels of pleasure when exposed to athlete endorsed ads with warm versus rational appeals.

H2b: Participants will experience significantly higher levels of arousal when exposed to athlete endorsed ads with warm versus rational appeals.

H3b: Participants will have more favorable perceptions (i.e., attractiveness, likeability trustworthiness, and expertise) of the athlete endorser when exposed to athlete endorsed ad with warm versus rational appeals.

Inspiration

To date, the majority of research on inspirational appeals has been conducted in the field of organizational behavior (e.g., Clarke & Ward, 2006; Falbe & Yukl, 1992; McFarland, Challagalla, & Shervani, 2006; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Within this area, researchers have argued that inspirational appeals are influence tactics, or strategies, used by managers to influence the behaviors of their peers, subordinates, and supervisors (Cable & Judge, 2006). Formally defined, an inspirational appeal is a "... request or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to a target's values, ideals, and aspirations, or by increasing the target's self-confidence that he or she can do the requested task" (Falbe and Yukl, 1992, p. 640). Inspirational appeals are grounded in the emotional and "... aim to satisfy a target's psychological needs by being attractive, by maintaining a fulfilling relationship with the target, and through eliciting positive emotional responses" (McFarland et al., 2006, p. 106). In line with this thinking, Yukl, Kim, and Falbe (1996) found that individuals exposed to inspirational appeals are more committed to carry out requested behaviors. Similarly, in the context of personal selling, researchers have reported that inspirational appeals "... elicit enthusiasm, liking, and other positive emotive feelings towards the salesperson" (p. 104). By extending these results to an athlete endorsement context, it is reasonable to assume that combining endorsers with inspirational appeals will generate more positive emotions in consumers. Since inspirational appeals use athletes in a way that satisfies consumers' needs for esteem, it is likely that such appeals will also influence consumers' perceptions of the endorser. Based on the foregoing commentary, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1c: Participants will experience significantly higher levels of pleasure when exposed athlete endorsed ads with inspirational versus rational appeals.

H2c: Participants will experience significantly higher levels of arousal when exposed to athlete endorsed ads with inspirational versus rational appeals.

H3c: Participants will have more favorable perceptions (i.e., attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise) of the athlete endorser when exposed to athlete endorsed ad with inspirational versus rational appeals.

Emotional Responses

In recent years, scholarly work has shifted from explaining the effects of appeals to examining the effects of consumers' emotional responses. Specifically, researchers have been interested in examining the mediating role of emotions between advertising content and attitudes toward the advertisement, attitudes toward the brand, and consumer behavior (e.g., Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2003; Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Merchant & Rose, 2013; Olney et al., 1991; Shimp & Stuart, 2004; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005). Holbrook and Batra (1987) were among the first to investigate this relationship and found that several emotional dimensions fully mediated the relationship between advertising content and attitudes towards the ad. In addition, the study revealed that, coupled with attitudes towards the ad, emotions partially mediated the relationship between advertising content and attitudes toward the brand. Similarly, Olney et al. (1991) found the relationship between advertising content and consumer behavior (i.e., viewing time) was partially mediated by pleasure, arousal, and attitudes towards the ad. More recently, Escalas and Stern (2003) indicated a partial mediation effect among dramatic advertising content, sympathy responses, empathy responses, and positive

attitudes towards the ad. In addition, the authors showed that the emotional dimensions of sympathy and empathy each had a direct impact on attitudes towards the ad.

These studies are framed within the general hierarchy of effects framework, which suggests that advertising leads consumers through a set of hierarchical stages (Smith, Chen, & Yang, 2008). Although several variations of the model exist, there is consensus among researchers that advertising content influences emotion, emotion influences attitude, and attitude influences behavior. Accordingly, emotions are viewed as antecedents of consumer attitudes (Olney et al., 1991). Bagozzi et al. (1999) noted that "... emotions arise in response to appraisals one makes for something of relevance to one's well-being" (p. 185). In other words, emotions are mental, physiological states that arise automatically in response to marketing stimuli. The idea is that because emotional responses are automatic, they "... may transfer to consumers' feelings about the ad and brand" (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). Essentially, this means that:

Elicited ad attitudes are likely to mirror the emotional response generated by the ad. Thus, ads that generate favorable emotions are likely to be well liked, whereas ads that elicit negative emotions are not likely to be well liked (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989, p. 14).

Supporting evidence for this hypothesis has been accumulated for more than two decades, and researchers have found that advertisements eliciting positive emotions are more likely to have a positive effect on consumer attitudes (Batra & Ray, 1986; Eckler & Bolls, 2011; Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 1998; Matthes, Wonneberger, & Schmuck, 2014). Given that advertising often elicits intense, short-term emotional states (Bagozzi et al., 1999), it is reasonable to assume that positive emotional responses to advertising

will lead to more positive attitudes toward the ad and the objects and people in it.

A number of studies have suggested that emotions are significant determinants of attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Escalas & Stern, 2003; Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007; Olney et al., 1991). While no research has been carried out examining the effects of emotion on consumer perceptions of celebrity endorsers, there is evidence to suggest that consumer perceptions are influenced by emotional states (e.g., Ha & Perks, 2005; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Lee, Lee, Lee, & Babin, 2008; Merchant & Rose, 2013; Olney et al., 1991). This is an important caveat, because according to Brown (2013), the perceived likability of a celebrity should have a positive effect on the consumer's emotional response. To this end, creating a favorable image of the athlete endorser can be used as a strategy to evoke pleasure and interest in an ad, and in turn, positive athlete perceptions. Therefore, in order to drive positive attitudes toward the endorser, marketers must ensure their content is capable of eliciting positive emotions in consumers.

Given that previous research has shown that positive emotional appeals (i.e., humor, warmth, and inspiration) are likely to drive emotional responses in consumers (e.g., Eckler & Bolls, 2011; Mai & Schoeller, 2009), it is reasonable to believe that participants exposed to emotional appeals may tend to have a more positive attitude toward the advertisement, and in turn more favorable perceptions of the endorser. According to Choi and Rifon, (2007), "... favorable responses to celebrity endorsements might occur only when consumers perceive the images or meanings the celebrity represent and convey as desirable" (p. 309). As such, the significant effects that

advertising appeals have on attitude toward the celebrity endorsed ad may be solely due to the mediating role of emotions. Notably, this relationship may be stronger in consumers exposed to emotional appeals. In addition, this relationship will likely play an important role in consumer perceptions of the endorser. Based on the foregoing commentary, the following hypotheses were developed for the study:

H4a: The effect of advertising content on attitude toward the ad will be mediated by pleasure only when respondents are exposed to an emotional appeal (i.e., humorous, warm, or inspirational).

H4b: The effect of advertising content on attitude toward the ad will be mediated by arousal only when respondents are exposed to an emotional appeal (i.e., humorous, warm, or inspirational).

Attitude toward the Ad

Defined as a "... predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion (Lutz, 1985, cited in MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986, p.130), attitude toward the ad (A_{AD}) has been identified as a significant predictor of advertising effectiveness (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; MacKenzie et al., 1986; Mehta, 2000; Spears & Singh, 2004). Although several models have been introduced to explain the causal role of A_{AD} , the most popular one envisions a causal relationship from A_{AD} to attitude toward the brand (A_B) (Sicilia, Ruiz, & Reynolds, 2006). The fundamental premise of this model, known as the Affect Transfer Hypothesis (ATH) model, is that the positive cues embedded in an ad can drive an association between the ad and the brand, resulting in an affect transfer from the ad to the brand (Machleit & Wilson, 1988; Mackenzie et al., 1986). For example, Mitchell and Olson (1981) found that the use of a kitten generated positive affect in consumers,

resulting in stronger brand beliefs and more positive attitudes towards the brand.

Forwarding this idea, Keller and Aaker (1998) noted that affective responses generated by a brand's marketing (in the context of brand extensions) had a positive influence on consumers' perceptions of a brand extension. More recently, Silvera and Austad (2004) maintained that the characteristics of a celebrity endorser are transferred to the ad.

Since emotional advertisements generally evoke positive attitudes, it is reasonable to assume that these attitudes will influence consumer perceptions of the endorser. Thus, it is reasonable to surmise that exposure to emotional ads will lead to more positive perceptions of the endorser.

H5a: When respondents are exposed to a humorous appeal, attitude toward the ad will positively and significantly influence consumer perceptions of the endorser (i.e., attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise).

H5b: When respondents are exposed to a warm appeal, attitude toward the ad will positively and significantly influence consumer perceptions of the endorser (i.e., attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise).

H5c: When respondents are exposed to an inspirational appeal, attitude toward the ad will positively and significantly influence consumer perceptions of the endorser (i.e., attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise).

Perceptions of the Celebrity Endorser

A review of the extant literature has suggested that the effectiveness of the celebrity endorsement is determined by three salient characteristics of the endorser: (1) expertise (e.g., Homer & Kahle, 1990; Ohanian, 1990; Ohanian, 1991; Till & Busler, 1998), (2) attractiveness (e.g., Chao, Wührer, & Werani., 2005; Erdogan, 1999; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1990), and (3) trustworthiness (e.g., Amos et al., 2008; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Shimp, 1997). Together, these attributes combine to form

source credibility, which is “... a term commonly used to imply a communicator’s characteristics that affect the receiver’s acceptance of a message” (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). While not explicitly part of the meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989), researchers have argued that these variables represent the combined image of the celebrity and have a significant effect on brand attitudes, attitude toward the ad, and purchase intentions (Amos et al., 2008; Ohanian, 1990; Ohanian, 1991). Unfortunately, no research has examined whether these factors are indicative of attitude toward the endorser. While endorser characteristics play an important role in the endorsement process, they may not be directly related to advertising outcomes such as brand attitudes and purchase intentions. As such, these variables, when influenced by attitude toward the ad, may significantly influence consumers’ attitude toward the endorser, and in turn attitude toward the brand.

Endorser Expertise

Defined as “... the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions” (McCracken, 1989, p. 3), expertise refers to the extent to which the endorser is perceived as possessing a high level of knowledge, skills, and/or abilities related to a product or brand (Amos et al., 2008). Expertise is associated with several positive outcomes such as attitude change (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), purchase intentions (Ohanian, 1991), and beliefs (Wiener & Mowen, 1986). The source credibility model stipulates that a celebrity who is perceived as highly expert is more persuasive than a celebrity with low expertise (Aaker & Myers, 1987; Amos et al., 2008; Ohanian, 1990). While celebrities like Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian may not have any appreciable skills, the target audience may

perceive them as highly expert. Therefore, as long as the celebrity endorser is *perceived* as a highly credible source, he or she will be effective in influencing consumer behavior (Erdogan, 1999).

The sport marketing literature is replete with examples of how and why source expertise can influence consumer attitudes toward the ad and brand (e.g., Braunstein-Minkove et al., 2011; Charbonneau & Garland, 2005; Fink et al., 2004; Till & Busler, 2000). Professional athletes have been shown to be effective endorsers of certain products (i.e., energy bars and orange juice) because they are knowledgeable or experienced in the product category (Till & Busler, 2000). Other researchers have argued that expertise is derived from the athlete's performance. According to Koo et al. (2012) "... the perception of an athlete as an expert may significantly increase when the athlete wins consistently at his or her sport" (p. 148). While professional athletes generally possess high levels of expertise, it may be possible to enhance consumers' perceptions of their knowledge via advertising. For example, an advertisement that leaves the consumer with a positive impression of athletes' skills may significantly affect the endorser's perceived expertise. Thus, the ability of an advertisement to positively influence the athlete's perceived expertise may be an important variable in determining consumer attitudes toward the endorser.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to "... the honesty, integrity, and believability of an endorser" (Erdogan, 1999, p. 297). It also refers to the endorser's perceived dependability, reliability, and sincerity (Charbonneau & Garland, 2010). Research

examining the trustworthiness of the celebrity endorser has suggested that consumers are more likely to accept offers promoted by celebrities perceived as highly trustworthy (Chao et al., 2005). Friedman and Friedman (1979) contended that trustworthiness is highly correlated with attractiveness, and thus, celebrities who are well-liked are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy sources of information. Similar to research on source expertise, researchers have found that celebrities perceived as highly trustworthy are more persuasive than celebrities with low trust levels (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Although a number of researchers have suggested that expertise is more influential than trustworthiness (e.g. Homer & Kahle, 1990; Ohanian, 1990), a meta-analysis conducted by Amos et al. (2008) suggests otherwise. The authors found that endorser trustworthiness was the second strongest predictor of celebrity endorsement effectiveness, behind celebrity negative information. As such, trustworthiness has remained an important component of endorser credibility and a significant predictor of the endorser's effectiveness.

Sport marketers have also identified trustworthiness as a significant determinant of athlete endorser effectiveness (Fink et al., 2012; Kim & Na, 2007). Koernig and Boyd (2009) demonstrated that an unknown endorser depicted as a professional athlete was evaluated as more trustworthy than a non-athlete endorser when endorsing a sport-related brand compared to a non-sport related brand. Similarly, Fink, et al. (2012) found that trustworthiness played an important role in consumer perceptions of the product-celebrity fit and influenced intentions to purchase the endorsed good. Finally, Braunstein and Zhang (2005) identified trustworthiness as one of five dimensions thought to

significantly predict consumption patterns and perceived star power (i.e., likeable personality, athletic expertise, social attractiveness, and character style). Taken together, these results suggest the perceived trustworthiness of a professional athlete is an important determinant of a consumer attitudes and behaviors. Given that "... trust is built on expectations that are, in part, emotional" (Jones & George, 1998, p. 534), emotions and attitudes should influence consumer perceptions of the endorser, and in turn their willingness to purchase goods. Using a meaning transfer perspective, this means that athletes portrayed as honest and reliable will transfer these meanings to the brand, and may be perceived as more persuasive than other athlete endorsers.

Physical Attractiveness

Early research on attractiveness has dealt primarily with the physical appearance of spokespersons (Erdogan, 1999). These investigations have found that physically attractive communicators play an influential role in the formation of consumer beliefs (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979) and patronage intentions (Petroshius & Crocker, 1989). Kahle and Homer (1985) reasoned that because "... attractiveness information is conveyed more quickly than any other information" (p. 959), the attractiveness of the celebrity endorser is a significant contributor to attitude change. Consistent with this thinking, several studies have reported that physically attractive endorsers are more effective at enhancing purchase intentions and recall and creating more favorable attitudes toward the brand (e.g., Reichert, Heckler, & Jackson, 2001; Till & Busler, 2000). Attractive endorsers are also well liked and admired by consumers,

and as such, physical attractiveness is viewed as an important indicator of endorser effectiveness.

Sport marketers have identified attractiveness as the second most influential source effect, just behind source expertise (Fink et al., 2004; Till & Busler, 2000). While physically attractive athletes may receive more attention in the media, Fink et al. (2004) indicated that consumers tend to value athletes' expertise over attractiveness. In a similar way, Till and Busler (2000) found that expertise was a stronger basis of celebrity-product fit than attractiveness. Regardless, many researchers have deemed attractiveness as an important contributor of endorser effectiveness. This is important because research has shown that advertisers have the ability to influence consumer perceptions of the endorser's appearance (Lin & Yeh, 2009). As explained by Lin and Yeh (2009), the use of certain appeals can enhance the attractiveness of an endorser and positively influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. Based on this, it is reasonable to assume that positive emotional appeals will enhance the endorser's perceived attractiveness.

Likeability

According to Amos et al. (2008) and others, the attractiveness of the celebrity endorser encompasses more than just physical beauty and appearance; it represents the likeability, familiarity, and similarity of the endorser. Likeability is defined as the "... affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behavior" (Erdogan, 1999, p. 299); familiarity is characterized by the consumer knowledge and awareness of the endorser (Amos et al., 2008); and similarity is the perceived likeness between the image of the source and the receiver (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005). It has

been proposed that these dimensions form the source attractiveness model, and play an important role in influencing consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Amos et al., 2008). Although similarity and familiarity have been found to be important indicators of celebrity attractiveness, the most important dimension is perhaps the endorser's likeability (Erdogan, 1999). As such, this study will focus primarily on source likeability.

Investigations into source likeability are less studied than physical attractiveness, despite their essential value in determining the effectiveness of endorser (Amos et al., 2008). Several researchers (e.g., Dyson & Turco, 1998; Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994) have demonstrated that the use of a celebrity endorsing multiple products reduces their likeability as well as consumer attitudes toward the ad. On the other hand, research has shown that when "... the image of a celebrity is focused on likeability, then he/she can endorse a much broader range of products, since the image transfer is based on personality feature rather than a particular area of expertise" (Simmers, Damron-Martinez, & Haytko, 2009, p. 57). According to Choi and Rifon (2012), source effects such as likeability contribute to the image of the endorser, and thus, is an important determinant of the endorser's success. Kim and Na (2007) provided support for this idea, suggesting that celebrity likeability is a significant determinant of consumer attitudes towards the endorsed product. In addition and as previously mentioned, the perceived likeability of the athlete is an important determinant of his or her star power (Braunstein-Minkove et al., 2011). Notably, research has suggested that repeated exposures to professional athletes can enhance liking towards an ad and brand (Shank, 2005). From a

meaning transfer perspective, this is important, because it implies that marketers can manipulate advertising and celebrity images to improve the effectiveness of the endorsement. Thus, it seems likely that positive emotional appeals can enhance the perceived likeability of the endorser and in turn, consumer attitudes toward the endorser.

Taken together, perceived expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and likeability are important determinants of the celebrity endorser's effectiveness. Here, it is proposed that attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise form the combined image of the celebrity and are synonymous with his or her symbolic meanings. While celebrities may carry meanings beyond attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (McCracken, 1989), there is evidence to suggest that these variables also contribute to the celebrity's meanings (Amos et al., 2008). As such, if advertising can positively influence the endorser's image, it is reasonable to believe that attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise will positively influence consumer attitudes toward the endorser. Thus, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H6a: When respondents are exposed to a humorous appeal, endorser likeability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise will positively and significantly influence respondents' attitude toward the endorser.

H6b: When respondents are exposed to a warm appeal, endorser likeability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise will positively and significantly influence respondents' attitude toward the endorser.

H6c: When respondents are exposed to an inspirational appeal, endorser likeability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise will positively and significantly influence respondents' attitude toward the endorser.

Attitude toward the Endorser

As previously mentioned, the Affect Transfer model hypothesizes that A_{AD} has a significant effect on A_B (Machleit & Wilson, 1988). Similarly, the model suggests that attitudes are an important indicator of consumer behavior. This idea is in line with the Attitude-Behavior Consistency Model, which suggests that the congruence between individuals' immediate perceptions and attitudes will result in "attitudinally consistent behavior" (Fazio, 1986). This means that consumers' preexisting affect associated with an object or brand will positively influence their behavior. While much of the research in advertising has focused the relationship between A_B and behavioral intentions, a number of studies have shown that A_{AD} can influence both A_B and purchase intentions (Edell & Burke, 1984). This is important because it implies that attitudes beyond those associated with the brand are capable of influencing behavioral intentions.

From a co-branding perspective, researchers have argued that attitude toward the company or the company's brand can be enhanced by associating with other brands, charitable causes, or organizations (e.g., Lafferty & Edmonson, 2009; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005; Maoz & Tybout, 2012). Maoz and Tybout (2002) provided support for this hypothesis, showing a direct causal relationship between attitude toward a co-branded product and attitude toward the parent brand. Likewise, in the context of cause-related marketing, researchers have identified a positive relationship between attitude toward a brand alliance and brand attitudes (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005). Considerable research has also found a direct relationship between the secondary brand (i.e., sponsor, partner brand, cause, etc.) and consumer behavior. For example, numerous researchers

have found a positive relationship between attitudes toward the sponsor and purchase intentions of the brand (e.g., Koo, Quarterman, & Flynn, 2006; Speed & Thomson, 2000). Similarly, Lafferty and Edmondson (2009) discovered a significant linkage between consumers' attitudes toward a brand alliance and their intentions to purchase the primary brand.

As such, it is reasonable to conclude that brands are influenced by the organizations, brands, and causes with which they associate. Additional support for this conclusion is provided by studies showing that endorser characteristics are important indicators of both attitude toward the brand and behavioral intentions (e.g., Kahle & Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1991; La Ferle & Choi, 2005). For example, Kahle and Homer (1985) demonstrated that endorser attractiveness had a strong and direct impact on brand recall, attitude toward the ad, and purchase intentions. Similarly, Ohanian (1991) found a positive link between endorser attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise and consumer purchase intentions. La Ferle and Choi (2005) demonstrated a positive relationship between endorser credibility and attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions. Taken together, these studies and others (e.g., Choi & Rifon, 2007; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Tripp et al., 1994) indicate that celebrity endorsers can have a powerful influence on brand attitudes and consumer behavior. Unfortunately, no study has examined the relationship between attitude toward the endorser and attitudes and behaviors toward the brand. Based on the foregoing considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7a: When respondents are exposed to a humorous appeal, attitude toward the endorser will positively and significantly influence brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth.

H7a: When respondents are exposed to a warm appeal, attitude toward the endorser will positively and significantly influence brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth.

H7a: When respondents are exposed to an inspirational appeal, attitude toward the endorser will positively and significantly influence brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods that were used to test the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. Drawing on previous research, the purpose of this study was to examine the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the endorser, advertisement, and brand. This chapter provides information about the research design, advertising stimuli, study participants, data collection procedures, and instrumentation.

Research Design

This study featured a 4 (appeal type: humorous vs. inspirational vs. warmth vs. rational appeal) x 2 (athlete endorser vs. non-athlete endorser) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight cells and were exposed to a television commercial produced by the Nike brand. The objective of the study was to examine whether different appeal types influenced consumer emotional responses, and to determine the extent to which the appeals influenced consumer attitudes toward the ad, endorser characteristics, attitudes toward the endorser, attitudes toward the brand, and behavioral intentions. The hypotheses were tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA), multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), multivariate multiple regression, and multiple regression analyses. In the athlete endorsement condition, participants were expected to have stronger emotional reactions towards the ad, and in

turn, strong, favorable perceptions of the endorser. In addition, emotional appeals were expected to outperform rational appeals in both conditions, and positively influence consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

Athlete and Brand Selection

To enhance external validity, all of the advertisements selected for the current study featured the same brand and the same athlete endorser (in the athlete endorser condition). The purpose of selecting a well-known athlete and brand was to isolate the appeal effects on consumer attitudes and perceptions. To reduce response bias, participants were asked to indicate the degree they agree or disagree with the following statements about the brand: "I have always had a good impression of [brand]," "In my opinion, [brand] has a good image in the minds of consumers," and "I believe [brand] has a better image than its competitors." Participants assigned to the athlete endorser condition were asked to answer an additional set of questions, but with the word "endorser" replacing the word "brand" (e.g., "I have always had a good impression of [endorser]"). These responses were used to control for consumer perceptions of the athlete and attitude toward the brand.

Since much of the previous research on athlete and celebrity endorsements has suggested there should be an appropriate "fit" between the endorser and endorsed brand (e.g., Amos et al., 2008; Kim & Na, 2007; Silvera & Austad, 2004), a sport brand was selected as the focal brand. A sample of advertisements was created by conducting a search on YouTube for television commercials produced by the following brands: Nike,

Under Armour, adidas, and Reebok. Specifically, the search was conducted using the search terms “Nike commercials,” “Under Armour commercials,” “adidas commercials,” and “Reebok commercials.” Each search was sorted by view count, and the 25 most viewed advertisements were selected from each brand. The ads were coded according to the following dimensions: appeal, view count, endorser (yes or no), and sport. The results of this analysis indicated that Nike employed the most diverse set of appeals, and had more view counts than any other brand. Based on these results, Nike was selected as the focal brand for the study.

Forbes’ list of highest-paid athletes was used to generate a sample of potential athlete endorsers (Badenhausen, 2014c). The initial sample consisted of the five highest paid athletes who also endorsed the Nike brand (e.g., Cristiano Ronaldo, LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, Tiger Woods, and Roger Federer). A sample of five advertisements was created for each of the professional athletes. Searches were conducted via YouTube, and the ads were coded for the following information: appeal, athlete, and view count. LeBron James was selected as the athlete endorser because he starred in commercials featuring the most diverse set of appeals.

The Advertising Stimuli

Previous research has indicated that real television advertisements elicit stronger emotional responses in consumers than print ads (Brown, Homer, & Inman, 1998; Machleit & Wilson, 1988). Although the use of a real advertisement can pose a threat to internal validity, there is evidence to suggest the use of real stimuli should enhance

external validity (Aaker et al., 1986; Alwitt, 2002; Torres & Briggs, 2007). As explained by Aaker et al. (1986), "... it is unlikely that experimenter-produced commercials could generate the level of feeling available from real ads" (p. 369). Therefore, given the focus and anticipated outcomes of the current study, real television commercials served as the advertising stimuli.

An initial sample of N=25 (i.e., 10 endorser ads, 15 non-endorser ads) advertisements was created by conducting a search on YouTube for "Nike commercials," and "LeBron James Nike commercials." Athlete endorsed ads were only included in the sample if they lasted 90 seconds or less and only contained one athlete endorser (i.e., LeBron James only). Non-athlete endorsed ads were included in the sample as long as they lasted 90 seconds or less and contained no famous endorser. Ads lasting over 90 seconds were not included in the sample, because it is difficult to maintain consumer interest after 90 seconds (Southgate & Poole, 2014). The ads were coded based on their appeals, and 16 ads (2 per condition) were identified as representing the appropriate conditions.

Eight advertisements were selected from the pool of N=16 ads and were sent to a panel of sport marketing experts to review (see Table B-1 for descriptions of the ads). The expert panel was comprised of five faculty members from four universities, all with expertise in marketing communications and sport branding. The sport marketing experts were asked to watch the ads and rate the degree to which they believed the appeals were humorous, warm, inspirational, or rational. When a disagreement occurred about an ad or its appeal, the ad under question was replaced by an ad from the remaining pool and

re-evaluated in a pilot test. Table B-1 presents a summary of the eight television ads that were preliminarily selected.

Feedback from the expert panel prompted the removal of two advertisements: (1) athlete/informational and (2) non-athlete/inspirational. The athlete/informational ad was replaced because mean scores were low across all appeals. Although intended to be informational, the experts did not rate the advertisement this way ($M=4.00$, $SD=1.87$). The non-athlete/inspirational ad was replaced because the panel believed that it contained more than one appeal. Specifically, the advertisement was perceived as both warm ($M=5.40$, $SD=2.60$) and inspirational ($M=7.00$, $SD=0.00$). These ads were replaced by the ads described in Table B-2.

Pretest

To ensure that the advertisements were perceived as depicting the appropriate appeals, a pretest was conducted whereby $N=46$ undergraduate and graduate students were randomly assigned to watch one of eight advertisements. Upon watching the ads, participants were asked to select the statement that most accurately described the ad: “This advertisement is humorous and intended to make the audience laugh,” “This advertisement provides a lot of information about a product and is intended to inform the audience about a product’s attributes or various features,” “This advertisement is sentimental and is designed to make the audience feel happy and warm,” and “This advertisement is focused on performance, talent, and skill, and is intended to inspire consumers to train hard and perform at the highest level.” The results of the pretest confirmed that each of the advertisements depicted their intended appeals. As illustrated

in Table B-3, six of the eight appeals were correctly identified by 100% of respondents. The remaining appeals were correctly identified by 83.3% of respondents. Given that the majority of participants correctly identified the appeals, no changes were made to the stimuli.

Participants and Procedures

Participants

N=350 participants were recruited from undergraduate sport management classes at a large university in the southwest region of the United States. This number was selected on the basis of the sample sizes in similar research (e.g., Stafford, Stafford, & Day, 2002) and to provide adequate power for statistical analyses. The use of a student sample was deemed appropriate, because young adults represent a large majority of the target market and tend to be emotionally attached to human brands (i.e., athletes and celebrities) (Thomson, 2006). In addition, student samples are more homogenous than the general population, and allow researchers to control for more error (Carpenter, Moore, & Fairhurst, 2005).

Procedures

Students enrolled in online classes were informed of the study via e-mail. The primary researcher provided students an information sheet describing the purpose and procedures of the study, and the following information was delivered via an e-Campus announcement:

In a couple of days, you will receive an email from your professors with a link to my survey. If you would like to participate in the study, you can click on the link to the survey. After you review some information about the study, you will click the next button at the bottom of the screen, and you will watch a Nike commercial and an endorser. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of eight advertisements. Four of the advertisements feature an athlete endorser and four of the advertisements feature a non-athlete endorser. This means that if you and a friend both participate in the study; you might be assigned to different advertisements. After you watch the commercials, you will answer a series of questions about the endorser and the Nike brand. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may drop out of the study at any time.

Two days after students were informed of the study, they were e-mailed a link to the experiment website. Both in the e-mail and in the classroom announcement, students were made aware that their participation was completely voluntary and that they may drop out of the study at any time.

Students were given 96 hours to participate in the study. Once they clicked on the survey link, they were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental conditions: (1) athlete endorser/humorous appeal, (2) athlete endorser/inspirational appeal, (3) athlete endorser/warm appeal, (4) athlete endorser/rational appeal, (5) non-athlete endorser/humorous appeal, (6) non-athlete endorser/inspirational appeal, (7) non-athlete endorser/inspirational appeal, (8) non-athlete endorser/rational appeal. Before viewing the ad, participants were asked to answer questions related to their perception of Nike's brand image. Those assigned to the endorser condition were also asked to answer questions related to their perceptions of LeBron James. All participants then watched an advertisement and answered a series of questions regarding their emotional responses, perceptions of the endorser, attitudes toward the advertisement and brand, and purchase

intentions. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete, and nothing else was required of participants after they submitted their responses.

Measures

After viewing the ad, participants responded to a series of items comprised of the independent and dependent variables. Additionally, a manipulation check was conducted on the advertising appeals. Participants were asked to select the statement that most accurately described the advertisement's appeal (e.g., "This advertisement is humorous and intended to make the audience laugh"). Following this, data on the following variables were collected: emotional responses (pleasure and arousal), attitude toward the advertisement, perceptions of endorser characteristics (attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise), attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions. These variables were selected because they have been shown to be important influences in the advertising literature and effective in identifying various advertising effects.

Emotional Responses

Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) PAD (pleasure, arousal, dominance) framework was used to assess participants' emotional responses to the ads. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree). Pleasure was assessed by a scale consisting of six items (e.g., "After watching the advertisement, I feel happy"). Similarly, a 6-item scale was used to measure arousal (e.g., "After watching the advertisement, I feel excited). These scales have been routinely used in

advertising studies and have shown to be effective in assessing consumers' emotional responses to ads (e.g., Olney et al., 1991; Lichtlé, 2007).

Attitude toward the Ad

Following Mitchell and Olson (1981), attitude toward the ad was assessed using four seven-point semantic differential scales anchored at -3 and +3 (bad – good, dislike – like, not irritating – irritating, uninteresting – interesting). These measures have been widely used in the endorsement literature and have been shown to be valid and reliable in empirical data sets (e.g., Illicic & Webster, 2011; Tripp et al., 1994).

Perceptions of the Endorser

Perceptions of the endorser were all measured on a 7-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree). Source likeability was assessed using a four items (“After watching the ad, I think the athlete endorser is friendly”) (Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Physical attractiveness (e.g., “After watching the ad, I think the endorser is attractive), expertise (e.g., “After watching the ad, I think the endorsers is skilled”), and trustworthiness (e.g., “I think the endorser is reliable”) were assessed using 5 items, all from Ohanian (1990). These scales have been widely used in celebrity and athlete endorsement research and have proven valid and reliable (Fink et al., 2012; Tripp et al., 1994; Till et al., 2008).

Attitude toward the Endorser

Attitude toward the endorser was assessed using the same four-items addressing attitude toward the ad. Participants were asked to respond to the following question: “How would you describe your overall evaluation of the endorser?” The scales were

anchored with endpoints “bad – good,” “dislike – like,” “not irritating – irritating,” and “uninteresting – interesting.”

Attitude toward the Brand

Scale items adapted by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) were used to assess respondent attitudes toward the brand. Participants were asked to evaluate their attitude toward the brand on three 7-point differential scales (“bad – good,” “unpleasant -- pleasant,” and “unfavorable – favorable”). The items have been validated and correlate well with other attitudinal measures used in this line of inquiry (e.g., Le Ferle & Choi, 2005; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999).

Purchase Intentions and Intentions to Spread Positive Word of Mouth

Purchase intentions and intentions to spread positive word of mouth were assessed using three-items by Till and Busler (2000). Participants responded to the following question, “How likely are you to consider (purchasing a product from/spreading positive word of mouth about) this brand in the future?” The scales will be anchored with endpoints “unlikely -- likely,” “definitely would not – definitely would,” and “improbable – probably.” These scales have been previously validated and are sound indicators of consumer purchase intentions (e.g., Fink et al., 2004; Fink et al., 2012).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Sample Demographics

Data were collected from college students ($N=341$) enrolled in sport management classes at a large southwestern university. The respondents' age ranged from 18 to 33 years, with a mean age of 21.2 years. Gender of the sample was equally represented (53.4% males; 46.6% females), and the majority of participants identified themselves as White/Caucasian (75%). The rest of the sample identified themselves as Black/African American (8.3%), Hispanic (13.7%), Asian/Pacific Islander (4.6%), or Other (0.9%).

Manipulation Checks

The manipulation of advertising content was tested by asking participants to select the statement that best described the ad: "This advertisement is humorous and intended to make the audience laugh," "This advertisement provides a lot of information about a product and is intended to inform the audience about a product's attributes or various features," "This commercial is sentimental and is designed to make the audience feel happy and warm," and "This commercial is focused on performance, talent, and skill, and is intended to inspire consumers to train hard and perform at the highest level." Over 80% of participants across all conditions correctly identified the appeals. Further analyses revealed that the inspirational appeal was the most accurately identified appeal

in the athlete condition, while the warm appeal was the most accurately identified appeal in the non-athlete condition. Table B-4 presents the total number of participants assigned to each experimental condition, as well as the percentage of correctly identified appeals.

Descriptive Statistics

Skewness and kurtosis were calculated to assess distributions and to ensure assumptions of normality were met. Skewness and kurtosis fell between the normal range (-2 and +2; -7 and +7) for all variables except brand attitude (pre) and brand image (pre). Given that Nike is the largest sports brand in the world, this was not viewed as problematic. A reliability analysis was carried out on all multi-item variables using Chronbach's alpha values (see Lance, Butts, & Michels, 2006). To ensure all of the scales were reliable, the reliability analysis was performed for each variable and block (i.e., non-athlete/warm, non-athlete/humorous, non-athlete/inspirational, non-athlete/informational, athlete/warm, athlete/humorous, athlete/inspirational, and athlete/informational). Based on the results of the analyses, item 4 was deleted from Russell and Mehrabian's (1974) pleasure scale (i.e., "This advertisement makes me feel contented"). The results also indicated that Ohanian's (1990) attractiveness scale was not reliable, with all Chronbach's alpha coefficients below .55. As such, attractiveness was assessed using only one item: "After watching the advertisement, I think that the endorser is attractive." Reliability analyses confirmed high internal consistency of all other scales: arousal, trustworthiness, expertise, likeability, attitude toward the endorser, attitude toward the brand, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of

mouth (Tables B-5 to B-12). Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations were computed to examine the relationships between all variables. Correlations were below the recommended cut point ($>.85$), which suggested many of the variables were significantly related. Tables B-5 to B-12 present the summary statistics for each experimental block.

Endorser Type and Advertising Appeals

Although the hypotheses presented in the previous section are mainly concerned with the influence of advertising on consumer perceptions of the athlete endorser, a control group was included to assess the effects of endorser type (i.e., athlete versus non-athlete). A series of MANOVA's were conducted to detect whether significant differences existed in respondent perceptions of the endorser and advertising outcomes due to appeals and endorser type. Separate MANOVA's were run for two clusters of dependent variables: (a) consumer perceptions of the endorser, which included the endorser's perceived trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and likeability and (b) advertising outcomes, which included attitude toward the ad, purchase intentions, attitude toward the brand, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth.

A 2 x 4 MANOVA was performed to examine the influence advertising appeal and endorser type on respondents' perceptions of the endorser. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity. Box's M test for the first MANOVA was significant ($p=.000$), suggesting that the data violated the assumption of

homogeneity of variance-covariance. Levene's Test was used to compare for equality of variances, and indicated that the assumption of equal variances was violated for athlete attractiveness ($p=.025$). Due to these violations, the more robust Pillai's Trace criterion (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), was used to assess significance. The results of the first MANOVA revealed significant main effects for advertising appeal (Pillai's Trace=.431, $F(12,1002)=14.01$, $p=.000$, $\eta^2=.144$) and endorser type (Pillai's Trace=.208, $F(4, 332)=21.74$, $p=.000$, $\eta^2=.208$); and a significant two-way interaction of advertising appeal by endorser type was seen (Pillai's Trace=.121, $F(12,1002)=3.51$, $p=.000$, $\eta^2=.040$). By Cohen's (1988) standards, the effect size for main effect of advertising appeal and endorser type were large, while the effect size for the interaction is small. Follow-up univariate tests revealed significant main effects of advertising appeals and endorser type on all four dependent variables (i.e., likeability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise). A univariate analysis of variance showed a significant two-way interaction effect for likeability, expertise, and attractiveness. The results of the univariate analyses are reported in Table B-13.

To further investigate the interaction effect, an analysis of simple effects was conducted. The results showed that for the inspirational, informational, and humorous appeals, non-athlete endorsers were rated as more likeable than athlete endorsers. Conversely, the analysis indicated that endorser expertise was significantly higher (i.e., more positive) than the non-athlete endorser among respondents exposed to the inspirational, informational, and warm appeals. With regards to attractiveness, the results showed that the non-athlete endorser was rated more attractive than the athlete endorser

in respondents exposed to informational and humorous appeals. Table B-14 presents the simple main effects for the interaction effect of advertising appeal by endorser type on respondents' perceptions of the endorser.

In order to address RQ1 regarding the relationship between advertising appeals and consumer perceptions of the endorser, Tukey's post-hoc test was used to analyze the differences between appeals. The results showed that endorsers appearing in advertisements containing warm appeals were perceived as significantly more likeable ($M=5.86$, $SD=1.01$) than endorsers appearing in ads containing humorous, inspirational, or informational appeals (see Table B-15). Likewise, respondents exposed to a warm or informational appeal rated the endorser as more attractive ($M=4.79$, $SD=1.51$; $M=5.11$, $SD=1.45$, respectively) than respondents exposed to the humorous ($M=4.37$, $SD=1.29$) or inspirational ($M=4.45$, $SD=1.32$) appeal.

The second MANOVA included the following dependent variables: attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth. Box's test for the second MANOVA indicated unequal variances ($p=.000$), and Levene's Test showed that the homogeneity was violated for attitude toward the ad ($p=.000$). As such, Pillai's Trace criterion was used to assess significance. The results of the second MANOVA showed a significant main effect of advertising appeal (Pillai's Trace=.165, $F(12,1002)=4.84$, $p=.000$, partial $\eta^2=.055$) and a significant interaction effect between advertising appeal and endorser type (Pillai's Trace=.107, $F(12,1002)=3.08$, $p=.000$, partial $\eta^2=.034$), but no significant main effect for endorser type (Pillai's Trace=.024, $F(4, 332)=2.00$, $p=.093$, partial $\eta^2=.024$).

According to Cohen's (1988) classification, these are moderate effect sizes. The subsequent univariate analyses revealed a significant main effect of advertising appeal on attitude toward the ad ($F(1, 343)=18.80, p=.000, \eta^2=.144$) and attitude toward the brand ($F(1, 343)=4.04, p=.008, \eta^2=.035$). A significant interaction between advertising appeal and endorser type was only found for attitude toward the ad, $F(3,343)=10.37, p=.000$, partial $\eta^2=.085$.

An analysis of simple effects was performed to explore the interaction effect on attitude toward the ad. The results indicated that respondents exposed to the athlete endorser/warm appeal had more favorable attitudes toward the ad ($M=6.42$) than respondents exposed to the non-athlete endorser/warm appeal ($M=5.66, p=.005$). Conversely, respondents exposed to the non-athlete endorser/humorous appeal ($M=5.45$) had more favorable attitudes toward the ad than respondents exposed to the athlete endorser/humorous appeal ($M=4.10, p=.000$). These results will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c proposed that respondents would experience significantly higher levels of pleasure when exposed to emotional (i.e., humorous, warm, and inspirational) versus rational appeals. ANOVA results revealed a significant main effect of advertising appeal on pleasure ($F(3,170)=20.71, p=.000$, partial $\eta^2=.268$). According to Cohen's (1988) calibrations, the effect size would be categorized as a large

effect. Tukey's post-hoc analysis indicated that the warm appeal condition induced significantly more pleasure ($M=5.74$, $SD=.751$, $p=.000$) than the rational, humorous or inspirational appeal. The analysis showed no differences between humorous, informational, or inspirational appeals. Thus, Hypothesis 1b is confirmed at the .05 level, while Hypotheses 1a and 1c were rejected. Table B-16 presents the ANOVA results and corresponding means, standard deviations, and paired comparisons.

Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c

Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c predicted that a humorous, warm, or inspirational appeal would induce significantly more arousal than an informational appeal. To examine the hypotheses, an ANOVA was run on arousal. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of advertising appeal type ($F(3,170)=6.65$, $p=.001$, partial $\eta^2=.105$). Tukey's post-hoc analysis revealed that the rational appeal induced significantly more arousal than the humorous appeal ($M=4.16$, $SD=.163$, $p=.027$). Similarly, the warm appeal resulted in significantly more arousal than the humorous appeal ($M=4.25$, $SD=1.07$, $p=.004$). There were no significant differences between the inspirational, warm, or informational appeals. Based on these results, Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c were rejected. Table B-16 presents the ANOVA results and the corresponding means, standard deviations, and paired comparisons for Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c, and 2a, 2b, and 2c.

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c predicted that respondents exposed to a humorous, warm, or inspirational appeal would have more favorable perceptions of the athlete endorser than respondents exposed to a rational appeal. A multivariate analysis of

variance (MANOVA) was employed to test the effect of advertising appeal on endorser likeability, attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. Box's M test was significant ($p=.002$), suggesting multivariate normality was not achieved. Homogeneity was assessed using Levene's Test and indicated unequal variance for athlete expertise ($p=.033$). Given this, the more Pillai's Trace criterion was used to assess significance. A significant main effect was found for advertising appeal, Pillai's Trace=.636, $F(12,507)=11.36$, $p=.000$, partial $\eta^2=.212$. The results suggest that consumer perceptions of the endorser did vary by appeal type.

A follow-up univariate analysis revealed a significant effect of advertising appeal on endorser expertise, endorser trustworthiness, and endorser likeability (see Table B-17). To further examine the effect of advertising appeal on endorser trustworthiness, endorser expertise, and endorser trustworthiness, a post hoc analysis test was conducted. Tukey's test indicated that participants exposed to the humorous appeal rated the endorser's expertise significantly lower ($M=4.60$, $SD=1.25$) than respondents exposed to the warm ($M=6.03$, $SD=.852$), inspirational ($M=6.10$, $SD=.846$), or rational appeal ($M=6.15$, $SD=.778$). Similarly, the results indicated that participants exposed to the humorous appeal rated the endorser's trustworthiness significantly lower ($M=4.31$, $SD=.841$) than participants exposed to the warm ($M=5.07$, $SD=1.05$), informational ($M=4.77$, $SD=.951$), or inspirational appeal ($M=5.26$, $SD=1.10$). Likewise, participants exposed to the informational appeal rated the endorser's trustworthiness significantly lower than participants exposed to the inspirational appeal ($p<.05$). With respect to the endorser's likeability, Tukey's test showed that the warm appeal was significantly

different than all other appeals ($p < .05$). The test also revealed significant differences between the inspirational and humorous appeal ($p < .05$), inspirational and informational appeal ($p < .05$), and informational and humorous appeal ($p < .05$). Participants exposed to the inspirational appeal rated the endorser's likeability significantly higher ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.07$) than participants exposed to the informational ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.08$) and humorous appeal ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.07$). Similarly, participants exposed to the informational appeal rated the endorser's likeability significantly higher than the participants exposed to the humorous appeal ($p < .05$). Participants exposed to the warm appeal rated the endorser's likeability higher than all other appeals ($p < .05$). Post hoc comparisons are reported in Table B-17. Based on these results, partial support is provided for Hypotheses 3b and 3c, and no support is provided for Hypothesis 3a.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b

Hypotheses 4a and 4b proposed that emotional dimensions pleasure and arousal would mediate the relationship between advertising content and attitude toward the ad only for emotional appeals (i.e., humorous, warm, and inspirational). Testing for mediation requires that four conditions are met: (1) there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable; (2) there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediator variable; (3) there is a significant relationship between the mediator variable and the dependent variable; and (4) when controlling for the mediator variable, the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable is reduced. A series of linear regressions were conducted to test the first three conditions for Hypotheses 4a and 4b.

Hypothesis 4a proposed that pleasure would mediate the relationship between the advertising content and attitude toward the ad in all emotional appeals. Three dummy variables were included in the regression equations to assess the effects of the four advertising appeal conditions. The informational appeal was used as a baseline for these comparisons. In the first step of the analysis, attitude toward the ad was regressed on each of the appeal dummy variables. The results indicated a significant effect of advertising content on attitude toward the ad ($F(3, 170)=43.749, p=.000$), indicating less favorable attitudes following an exposure to the humorous appeal ($\beta=-.430, p=.000$) and more favorable attitudes following an exposure to the warm appeal ($\beta=.197, p=.014$). The inspirational appeal was not significant ($\beta=.026, p=.737$). Given this and the negative relationship between humor and attitude toward the ad, subsequent analyses were primarily concerned with the warm appeal. In particular, although Hypothesis 4a predicted that pleasure would mediate the relationship between advertising content and attitude toward the ad across all emotional appeals, additional regressions were conducted to determine whether a mediation effect still held for the warm appeal. Thus, in the second stage of the analysis, pleasure was regressed on each of the appeal type dummy variables. The results indicated a significant main effect of advertising content on attitude toward the ad ($F(3, 170)=20.706, p=.000$), which suggests that more pleasure was experienced by respondents who were exposed to the warm appeal ($\beta=.523, p=.000$). In step three of the analysis, attitude toward the ad was regressed on pleasure. The results indicated significant main effects of pleasure on attitude toward the ad ($\beta=.530, p=.000$). To test the fourth condition, a regression was performed with pleasure

and the appeal type dummy variables as independent variables and attitude toward the ad as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant ($F(4, 169)=44.187$, $p=.000$), but the impact of the warm appeal was not ($\beta=-.092$, $p=.214$). This analysis suggests that pleasure fully mediated the relationship between the warm advertising content and attitude toward the ad. Based on these results, Hypothesis 4a is only partially supported.

Hypothesis 4b predicted that arousal would mediate the relationship between advertising content and attitude toward the ad across all emotional appeals (i.e., humor, warm, and inspirational). Using the informational appeal as the baseline, the same dummy variables were included in the analysis (i.e., humor, warm, and inspirational). As previously mentioned, the first regression indicated the warm and humorous appeals significantly influenced attitude toward the ad ($\beta=-.430$, $p=.000$; $\beta=.197$, $p=.014$, respectively). Given the negative relationship between humor and attitude toward the ad, all subsequent analyses were focused primarily on the warm appeal. However, the results of the second regression showed that the relationship between the warm advertising appeal and arousal was not significant ($\beta=.155$, $p=.086$). Thus, Hypothesis 4b was not supported.

Hypothesis 5

Hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5c predicted that when controlling for endorser image, attitude toward the ad would positively and significantly influence consumer perceptions of the endorser across all emotional appeals. To examine these hypotheses, a series of multivariate multiple regressions were conducted with endorser image and attitude

toward the ad as predictors of the endorser's likeability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. The analyses demonstrated that attitude toward the ad was a significant predictor of respondent perceptions of the endorser for the humorous (Wilk's Lambda=.460, $F(8, 76)=4.49$, $p=.000$), warm (Wilk's Lambda=.524, $F(8, 80)=3.81$, $p=.001$), and inspirational appeal (Wilk's Lambda=.376, $F(8, 68)=5.34$, $p=.000$). At the univariate level, equations for the endorser's trustworthiness and likeability were significant across all appeals; equations for the endorser's expertise were significant for the inspirational and humorous appeals; and equations for the endorser's attractiveness were significant only for the humorous appeal (see Tables B-18, B-19, and B-20).

Regarding the univariate analyses, the results showed that attitude toward the ad was the only predictor that significantly influenced the endorser's likeability in the warm ($\beta=.392$, $p=.009$) humorous ($\beta=.645$, $p=.000$), and inspirational conditions ($\beta=.591$, $p=.000$). Similarly, attitude toward the ad was the only predictor that significantly influenced the endorser's trustworthiness for the warm ($\beta=.584$, $p=.027$) and humorous appeals ($\beta=.586$, $p=.000$). Likewise, attitude toward the ad was the only significant predictor of endorser attractiveness in the humorous condition ($\beta=.265$, $p=.010$). Attitude toward the ad was the only predictor that significantly influenced endorser trustworthiness for the warm ($\beta=.584$, $p=.027$) and humorous appeals ($\beta=.586$, $p=.000$). Finally, attitude toward the ad was the only predictor that significantly influenced the endorser expertise in the humorous ($\beta=.586$, $p=.000$) and inspirational ad appeals ($\beta=.494$, $p=.002$). Based on these results, Hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5c were partially supported.

Hypothesis 6

Hypotheses 6a, 6b, and 6c predicted that for all emotional appeals (i.e., humorous, warm, and inspirational), the endorser's perceived expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and likeability would significantly influence respondents' attitudes toward the endorser. A series of multiple regressions were conducted for each appeal in which the endorser's likeability, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise were used as predictors of attitude toward the endorser. Table B-21 summarizes the results of the multiple regressions on attitude toward the endorser for each of the emotional appeals. For the humorous appeal, none of the independent variables significantly influenced attitude toward the endorser. Thus, Hypothesis 6a was rejected. The results for the warm appeal showed that likeability and expertise significantly influenced attitude toward the endorser ($R^2=.416$, $p<.05$), providing partial support for Hypothesis 6b. Partial support was also provided for the Hypothesis 6c ($R^2=.398$, $p<.05$). As seen in Table B-21, the endorser's perceived trustworthiness had a positive and significant effect on respondents' attitude toward the endorser.

Hypothesis 7

Hypotheses 7a, 7b, and 7c predicted that for all emotional appeals, attitude toward the endorser would positively and significantly influence respondent attitudes toward the brand, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth. To test these hypotheses, multivariate multiple regressions were run for each of the emotional appeals. The results of Hypothesis 7a indicated the overall relationship between attitude toward the endorser and advertising outcomes (i.e., attitude toward the

brand, purchase intentions, intentions to spread positive word of mouth) for the humorous appeal was not significant ($p=.075$). Thus, Hypothesis 7a was rejected. With regard to Hypothesis 7b, the results indicated that for the warm appeal, attitude toward the endorser was a significant predictor of advertising outcomes (Wilk's Lambda=.624, $F(3, 42)=8.42, p=.000$). The univariate F-tests revealed that attitude toward the endorser was a significant predictor of purchase intentions ($\beta=.549, p=.000$), attitude toward the brand ($\beta=.482, p=.001$), and intentions to spread positive word of mouth ($\beta=.373, p=.001$), thus providing full support for Hypothesis 7b (see Table B-22). With regard to Hypothesis 7c, no support was provided. For the inspirational appeal, attitude toward the endorser did not have a statistically significant effect on advertising outcomes: Wilk's Lambda=.823, $F(3, 36)=2.56, p=.070$.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Given the recent emphasis on athlete branding, it has become increasingly important for professional athletes to build and maintain their personal brands. Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to the influence of advertising on the endorsement process. Likewise, research has yet to examine whether certain advertising appeals are more effective in eliciting desirable emotional responses and influencing consumer behavior. The primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the advertisement, endorser, and brand. A secondary objective was to assess the mediating role of emotions between advertising content and attitude toward the ad. This chapter discusses the significance of the study's contributions to the literature and how the results can be applied to the sport marketing industry. In addition, limitations are discussed, and directions for future research are suggested.

Discussion of the Results

RQ1 sought to explore the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the endorser. As previously mentioned, although this study was not designed to be a comparison between athlete and non-athlete endorsers, non-athlete endorsers were included in the study to control for factors that might confound the relationship between advertising appeals and consumer perceptions of the endorser

and/or brand. Accordingly, the differences between the athlete and non-athlete endorsers were striking. Notably, the results showed that when exposed to a humorous, inspirational, or informational appeal, respondents rated non-athlete endorsers as more likeable than the athlete endorser. Similarly, when exposed to a humorous or inspirational appeal, respondents rated non-athlete endorsers as more attractive than the athlete endorser. Conversely, when exposed to an inspirational, informational, or warm appeal, respondents rated the athlete endorser as more expert than non-athlete endorsers. No differences were detected regarding trustworthiness.

Although unexpected, there are several explanations for these results. First, it is possible that the focal endorser selected for the study (i.e., LeBron James) was a confounding factor in the relationship between advertising appeals and consumer perceptions of the endorser. Despite being one of the most talented and recognizable athletes in the world, James' image is somewhat controversial. For example, after announcing his decision to leave the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2010, LeBron anecdotally became one of the most hated athletes in America. While the athlete's image has improved since his return, it is likely that sport consumers still associate him with the negative events from his past. Consistent with this idea, researchers (e.g., Till & Shimp, 1998) have reported that negative information about a celebrity negatively influences consumer attitudes and perceptions of the endorser. As such, it is reasonable to assume that, even when controlling for the athletes brand image, these results may have been influenced by the inclusion of the polarizing figure.

Another possible explanation for these results relates to the ease with which endorser meanings are created and exchanged. Although athletes and celebrities bring their own distinctive meanings to the endorsement process (McCracken, 1986, p. 315), the results of this study suggest that it may be easier for marketers to assign meanings to non-athlete endorsers. According to McCracken (1986):

Anonymous models offer demographic information, such as distinctions of gender, age, and status, but these useful meanings are relatively imprecise and blunt. Celebrities offer all these meanings with special precision. Furthermore, celebrities offer a range of personality and lifestyle meanings that the model cannot provide. (p. 315)

Based on the above commentary, it is reasonable to assume that advertising appeals have little effect on precise meanings that are embedded in athlete images. While the results showed that non-athlete endorsers were evaluated more favorably in terms of attractiveness and likeability, the athlete endorser was rated more favorably in terms of expertise. Since the majority of athletes are already associated with symbolic properties such as expertise, it is not surprising that the athlete endorser was perceived as more expert than the non-athlete endorsers. While McCracken (1986) argued that meanings assigned to non-athlete endorsers are not as effective as the meanings embedded in the celebrity image, the current results suggest this may not be the case. As such, marketers should not assume that athletes are more effective than non-athlete endorsers.

Although RQ1 was partially addressed in the discussion above, additional insights can be gleaned from the post hoc analysis conducted for Hypothesis 3. Notably, respondents exposed to the warm appeal rated the endorser as more likeable than respondents exposed to the informational, inspirational, or humorous appeal. These

results are consistent with those of Thomson (2006) who found that consumers are attracted to human brands that promote feelings of acceptance, openness, and belonging. Similarly, Arai et al. (2014) reported that an athlete's relationship effort with fans had a strong influence on consumer image and perceptions of the athlete's brand. Since the warm appeal portrayed LeBron James as a caring, genuine, and friendly person, it is perhaps not surprising the athlete was evaluated more favorably than when he was paired with the other appeals. Given that this was the only appeal to show such effects, it is reasonable to assume that athletes can acquire meanings when they are set in appropriate contexts. Additional support for this idea comes from the observation that respondents exposed to the inspirational appeal evaluated the endorser as more trustworthy than respondents exposed to the informational or humorous appeal. As explained by McCracken (1986), when marketers select contexts that already contain and give voice to consumer meanings, endorsers can properly portray the attributes presented in the ad. Since the inspirational appeal placed more emphasis on the athlete's skills than the other appeals, it is somewhat unsurprising that respondents rated endorser trustworthiness more favorably. Taken together, these results suggest that advertising appeals may facilitate the transfer of meaning from the advertisement to the endorser.

Notably, the results showed that the athlete endorser was evaluated less favorably when paired with the humorous appeal. This can be partly explained by classical conditioning theory, which suggests that consumer attitudes depend on the successful pairing of two stimuli (Till et al., 2008). According to Till et al. (2008), "... classical conditioning is a process by which an unconditioned stimulus (US), a stimulus that

naturally produces a responses, is paired with a conditioned stimulus (CS), a stimulus that does not naturally produce the response but comes to elicit the conditioned response (CR) following the pairing” (p. 180). In the present study, the athlete endorser served as the unconditioned stimulus, while the advertising appeals served as the conditioned stimulus. Although the current research hypothesized that emotional appeals (i.e., warmth, inspiration, humor) would result in more favorable consumer responses (i.e., conditioned responses), prior research has shown that consumer attitudes are more favorable when there is a natural fit between the stimuli (i.e., conditioned and unconditioned stimulus) (Till et al., 2008). In light of this, it is not surprising to find that the athlete endorser was evaluated less favorably when paired with the humorous appeal. While preliminary, these results suggest that negative associations are more likely to transfer to the endorser than positive associations. Additional support for this idea stems from the observation that respondents rated endorser expertise less favorably when paired with a humorous appeal. While humor is a universal concept, it may not be an appropriate strategy for every brand. Therefore, the results of this study may be a reflection of the perceived lack of fit between the appeal and the endorser, and vis-a-vis, the appeal and the brand.

Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 predicted that respondents exposed to emotional appeals (i.e., humorous, warm, and inspirational) would report more intense emotional responses (i.e., pleasure and arousal) than respondents exposed to rational appeals. Support for Hypothesis 1b—that respondents exposed to the warm appeal would experience more pleasure than respondents exposed to the rational appeal—was found.

However, support was not found for Hypothesis 1a or 1c. An explanation for these results may lie in the fact that warmth is directly related to feelings of happiness and pleasure (Aaker et al., 1986). As explained by Aaker and Bruzzone (1981), warm commercials "... reflect more of an emotional, image-oriented impact and involve less cognitive activity" (p. 20). As such, it is not surprising that respondents exposed to the warm appeal evaluated the commercial as more pleasurable than respondents exposed to other appeals.

Although prior research has shown that pleasure is often derived from humorous content or exciting sporting events (Belch & Belch, 2003), the results of this study suggest that in the context of athlete endorsements, humorous and inspirational appeals elicit the same responses as rational appeals. Given the importance of "fit" between the athlete endorser and brand (e.g., Fink et al., 2004; Till & Busler, 2000), this result is somewhat unsurprising. For example, according to the match-up hypothesis and classical conditioning theory, consumers evaluate products and brands more favorably when there is a natural fit between the product and endorser (e.g., Kamins, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000; Till et al., 2008). Based on this, it is reasonable to assume that the mismatch between the athlete endorser and humorous appeal caused respondents to experience less pleasure than otherwise experienced naturally. Unfortunately, this idea is not sufficient to explain the results regarding Hypothesis 1c. Given the fit between a professional athlete and inspirational appeal, the match-up hypothesis cannot be used to explain these results. As such, this inconsistency may be due to consumer involvement. According to Johar and Sirgy (1991), emotional appeals are more appropriate for low involvement

goods, while rational appeals are more appropriate for high involvement goods. Since previous research has shown that sports products elicit moderate levels of involvement, it is reasonable to believe that no differences were detected between the two appeals.

As for Hypothesis 2, the results showed that respondents exposed to inspirational, informational, or warm appeals were significantly more aroused than participants exposed to the humorous appeal. Notably, however, no differences were detected between the other appeals (i.e., informational, inspirational, and warm) and thus, Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c were rejected. Although previous research has shown that positive emotional appeals produce higher levels of arousal than rational appeals (e.g., Aaker et al., 1986, Olney et al., 1991), it is possible that the presence of a celebrity alone can induce an emotional state. As explained by Forehand and Perkins (2005), "... assuming an individual associates affect with a given celebrity, it is then possible that the activation of that affect could inform other judgments" (p. 436). Consistent with this thinking, several studies have reported that the presence of a celebrity alone can lead to positive (or negative) attitudes toward the brand (Till et al., 2008). As such, it is reasonable to surmise that when paired with celebrities, emotional appeals may not have a strong influence on arousal. It is important to note, however, that although studies have found a significant effect of emotional appeals on arousal (e.g., Olney et al., 1991); the mean scores for the current sample were low across all appeals (all means less than 4.50). Taken together, these results suggest that even when paired with emotional appeals, the athlete endorsed ad may not be interesting enough to induce significant levels of arousal.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b predicted that emotional dimensions pleasure and arousal would mediate the relationship between advertising content and attitude toward the ad only when respondents were exposed to emotional appeals. Partial support was provided for Hypothesis 4b. According to the results, pleasure fully mediated the relationship between the warm advertising content and attitude toward the ad. Although considerable research has shown that emotional dimensions such as pleasure, arousal, and dominance clearly mediate the effects of advertising content on attitude toward the ad (e.g., Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Olney et al., 1991), this was not the case for all of the emotional appeals in the current investigation. The significant mediation suggests that emotions play an important role in attitude formation, but only when appeals are warm. This is important information for marketers because as will be discussed below, there appears to be some evidence for a significant relationship between attitude toward the ad and consumer perceptions of the endorser.

Hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5c predicted that when controlling for endorser image, attitude toward the ad would positively and significantly affect consumer perceptions of the endorser. All hypotheses were supported. Although it has traditionally been held that endorser characteristics (i.e., likeability, attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) are positively predictive of attitude toward the ad (e.g., La Ferle & Choi, 2005; Ohanian, 1990); the current study suggests that attitude toward the ad is an important indicator of consumer perceptions of the endorser. Given the significant relationships between attitude toward the ad and consumer perceptions of the endorser for all emotional appeals, it is reasonable to assume that marketers are capable of augmenting the

endorser's image via advertising. These results are consistent with the affect transfer hypothesis which postulates a direct one-way causal flow from attitude toward the ad to attitude toward the brand (Homer & Kahle, 1990). Although the focus here is on consumer perceptions of the endorser rather than the brand, the data infer that attitude toward the ad plays an important role in shaping endorser meaning.

Hypotheses 6a, 6b, and 6c predicted that endorser expertise, attractiveness, likeability, and trustworthiness would significantly and positively predict attitude toward the endorser for all emotional appeals. The results provided partial support for Hypotheses 6b and 6c, and no support for Hypothesis 6a. Results showed that endorser likeability and endorser expertise were significant predictors of attitude toward the endorser for the warm appeal condition. Similarly, the results indicated that endorser trustworthiness was a significant predictor of attitude toward the endorser for the inspirational appeal. Although few studies have examined the influence of endorser characteristics on attitude toward the endorser, the current results suggest that the relationship exists. These results demonstrate the importance of selecting an appeal that is capable of transferring affect from the endorser's characteristics to the endorser. Although some researchers have argued that endorser characteristics and endorser attitudes are essentially the same thing (Silvera & Austad, 2004), the current results suggest this is not the case. This is important information because it implies that the constructs are mutually exclusive. As such, marketers should develop marketing strategies to better address the endorser's trustworthiness, likeability, expertise, and

attractiveness. Implementing such strategies has the potential to change consumer attitudes and essentially, improve the effectiveness of the endorser and ad.

Hypotheses 7a, 7b, and 7c proposed that attitude toward the endorser would significantly and positively predict brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth. A significant result was only obtained for Hypothesis 7b. According to the results, attitude toward the endorser was a significant predictor of brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth in the warm appeal condition. Notably, attitude toward the endorser explained 28.5% of the variance in purchase intentions, 21.4% of the variance in brand attitudes, and 11.9% of the variance in intentions to spread positive word of mouth. Although it has traditionally been held that attitude toward the ad is the most important indicator of attitudes and behavior toward the brand, the current study provides evidence this is not always the case. The results suggest that a favorable evaluation of the endorser will lead to more positive attitudes and behaviors toward the brand. Taken together, the results imply that it is indeed possible to transfer meaning from the advertisement to the endorser and back to the brand. Due to the preliminary nature of the present data, the results should be interpreted with caution. These results are an important first step toward understanding the role of advertising and meaning transfer in consumer perceptions of the endorser.

Implications

Although the work presented here is still in its infancy, several implications can be gleaned from the results. First, companies should conduct cost-benefit analyses to

evaluate the pros and cons of hiring athlete endorsers. While a company like Nike can afford to pay millions of dollars to professional athletes, the same cannot be said for smaller firms. When considering the use of a professional athlete, companies should ensure that the benefits to their organizations outweigh the costs. Traditionally, it has been argued that celebrities are effective endorsers because they increase brand recognition and generate positive attitudes toward the product and brand (e.g., Silvera & Austad, 2004; Till & Busler, 2000; Tripp et al., 1994). While this may be true, the results of the present study suggest that meanings can be transferred to (and through) both athlete and non-athlete endorsers. Based on this, sport marketers should determine if a professional athlete endorser is necessary to achieve their marketing communication goals. While some researchers have argued that the use of a high-profile celebrity can positively influence sales and stock returns (Elberse & Verleun, 2012), many firms have found success using other strategies and techniques. For example, rather than hiring the most talented and recognizable athletes in the world, Under Armour prefers to align its brand with “the next generation of athletes” (Walker, 2011). This strategy is beneficial because it allows the brand to assign meanings to athletes at the beginning of their careers. While this strategy may not be ideal for every company or brand, it provides an opportunity for smaller companies to compete with bigger firms. Thus, sport marketers should consider the effects of different endorser types and appeals and adapt their advertising strategies accordingly.

When a company decides to invest in an endorser, it should take great care in selecting appeals. Although there were few differences between the appeals in terms of

advertising outcomes (i.e., attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive WOM), the results of this study seem to suggest that athletes are more effective when paired with warm appeals. When analyzing the effectiveness of the warm appeal, the results showed that attitude toward the endorser had a positive and significant effect on brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and intentions to spread positive word of mouth. In addition and as previously observed, the athlete endorser was perceived as more likeable when paired with the warm appeal. Based on this, sport marketers should implement advertising campaigns aimed at eliciting feelings of happiness and warmth. As noted by Aaker et al. (1986), this can be accomplished by portraying commercial characters (or endorsers) as objects of pride, love, sympathy, or physical attraction. Although many of the results presented here are speculative, there is evidence to suggest that the warm appeal was more successful in influencing attitudinal and behavioral change.

In terms of implications for professional athletes, the results suggest that athletes should take a more active role in the endorsement process. Although the results showed that advertising appeals had little effect on the athletes' previously acquired meanings (i.e., expertise), there is considerable evidence to suggest that advertising content plays an important role in influencing consumer perceptions of the endorser and the ad. Given the reported results, professional athletes should engage in partnerships that have the potential to maximize fan interest and strengthen their personal brands. Again, while there was evidence to suggest that different types of appeals are capable of positively influencing consumer perceptions of the endorser and the ad, it appears that the use of

the warm appeal provides maximum benefits to both the athlete and the brand. As such, professional athletes would benefit from integrating warm or emotive appeals with their personal brand communications.

For sport management and marketing disciplines, this research adds to the literature on athlete and celebrity endorsements by demonstrating the transfer of meaning from the advertisement to the endorser, back to the brand. Studies on celebrity endorsements often focus on endorser characteristics and the perceived fit between the celebrity and brand (e.g., Till & Busler, 2000). Although these factors contribute to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements, they do not explain the effects of advertising on consumer perceptions of the endorser or brand. Thus, this study extends the literature by testing the influence of advertising appeals on attitude toward the ad and consumer perceptions of the brand. In addition, this study provides important building blocks in our understanding of emotional dimensions arousal and pleasure and their role in influencing the athlete endorsement process.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any study, the current study has several limitations. First, this study was limited by its focus on a single brand (i.e., Nike) and endorser (i.e., LeBron James). Although the purpose of this research was to assess the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the endorser, the hypotheses presented here should be tested across a wider range of brands and professional athletes to determine the extent to which the results can be generalized to other contexts. While there are some advantages to

using advertisements featuring well-known athletes and brands, it is possible that the inclusion of such stimuli skewed the results. For example, as previously mentioned, the distribution of pre-attitude toward the brand was positively skewed (i.e., the distribution contained more positive attitudes than negative attitudes), and as a result, it is difficult to generalize the results obtained. Likewise, pre-attitude toward the endorser was relatively low, and thus, it is possible that the current results reflect confounding by these factors. To combat these issues and to ensure that the results are applicable to all settings, future researchers should consider examining the influences of lesser-known endorsers and brands. Specifically, further research is needed to understand how advertising appeals influence consumer perceptions of athletes and brands of different qualities and strengths.

A second limitation concerns the internal validity of the study design. Although previous research has shown that the use of real television commercials is necessary for eliciting emotional responses in consumers (Aaker et al., 1986), it is difficult to control the confounding elements caused by varying commercial lengths, product categories, music, and other advertising characteristics. As such, future research should attempt to explore the effects of advertising appeals using additional product categories and advertising controls. When creating or selecting advertising stimuli, researchers should pay particular attention to factors that might influence consumer attitudes or the outcomes of interest. Future research should also consider conducting an alternative manipulation check. Although the current study included several different manipulation checks (i.e., expert panel and a pre-test), additional research is needed to validate the

results. Rather than asking participants to select a statement that best describes the assigned ad, researchers should ask participants to rate the extent to which different appeals are represented. In other words, researchers should ask participants to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree that the appeal was depicted in the ad. Such manipulation checks are consistent with previous research (Aaker & Williams, 1998; Moore & Harris, 1996), and will enhance the quality of data. Future research should also attempt to replicate the current findings in a more controlled setting. Participants were allowed to complete the questionnaire on their personal computers, and as such, it is possible that they were not focused on the task at hand. By re-testing the hypotheses in a laboratory and controlling potential confounding factors, such approaches can enhance internal validity.

Although the results of this research were relatively robust, the generalizability of the study is limited by the sample characteristics. Because the sample consisted primarily of undergraduate students from one region of the United States, the results should not be generalized to other populations. As such, similar studies should be conducted with larger, more diverse populations. Specifically, researchers should recruit participants of different ages and of different cultural backgrounds. While this study provides a first step in understanding the influence of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the endorser and ad, additional research is needed to determine if differences exist in terms of ethnicity and gender.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The results from this study provide valuable insights into the effects of advertising appeals on athlete endorsements. More specifically, the empirical findings provide a new understanding of the meaning transfer process, suggesting that meanings can be transferred from the advertisement to the endorser, and back to the brand. Although limited research has focused on the relationship between advertising and consumer perceptions of the endorser, the present study adds to that body of literature by suggesting that a relationship exists. In addition, the results of this study provide important theoretical and practical insights into why, and under what conditions, athlete endorsers and athlete endorsed ads are more effective in stimulating positive consumer responses.

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APPENDIX A

FIGURES

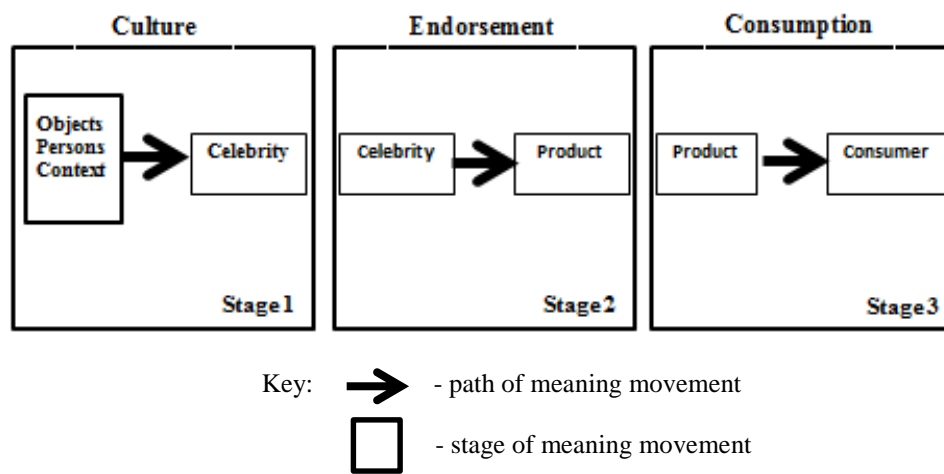


Figure A-1

McCracken's Model of Meaning Transfer

APPENDIX B

TABLES

Table B-1. Description of the Advertisements

Appeal	Description of the Ad	Endorser (Y/N)
Inspirational	The advertisement opens up with LeBron James saying, “You don’t want to be LeBron James.” An image of a child playing basketball flashes across the screen, while LeBron James talks about inspiration. The child eventually turns into LeBron and the commercial closes with LeBron dunking the basketball, saying, “I do see the light, and it is up to me to go get it. I am LeBron James and you don’t want to be me. You want to be better than me.”	Yes
Humorous	In Nike’s “Swimming Pool,” ad, LeBron James portrays different versions of himself (wise LeBron, business LeBron, athlete LeBron, and kid LeBron). Kid LeBron does a cannon ball off the diving board while athlete LeBron stands in place, running and training in the pool. Wise LeBron taunts the other LeBron’s, while business LeBron stands at the edge of the diving board. After Wise LeBron calls business LeBron a “pretty boy,” the athlete (businessman) does an Olympic style dive off the pool, and smiles as he swims in the pool.	Yes
Warm	Set to the song “My Shoes,” by John Legend, LeBron James spends the day training with some of his biggest fans. The majority of these fans are children and they follow him throughout the day on bikes as he trains for the next season. In the commercial, the basketball player interacts with the kids, and gives the shoes off of his feet to a high-school aged young man playing street basketball. The commercial closes with some of the children dropping LeBron off at his home. He turns and says, “Cool guys, Tomorrow?”	Yes
Rational	LeBron James introduces his new shoe line called the LeBron X. The athlete’s voice is used to describe the shoe’s features, while a silhouette of the athlete serves as the background of the ad.	Yes
Inspirational	In one of Nike’s most popular advertisements of all time, an overweight child runs down a long, empty street, as a voice-over says the following: “Greatness is no more unique to us than breathing. We’re all capable of it. All of us.”	No
Warm	A man is casually running on the streets until he receives a text message on his phone and eventually starts to sprint home. The man runs out of his house with what appear to be two running bags, and the next he is seen, he is racing through the hallways of a hospital. He makes it just in time to see his wife give birth to their first child. The commercial closes with an image of the baby wearing Nike running shoes, and the following slogan across the screen: “Born to Run.”	No
Humorous	In Nike’s “Enjoy the Weather” commercial, a man and woman battle it out on the trails, attempting to splash one another by running through muddy puddles of water. The runners are in a heated battle until a bus rounds a corner and drives through a huge puddle of water, soaking both the man and woman. The commercial closes with the infamous Nike logo, and the following slogan, “Enjoy the Weather.”	No
Rational	The rational advertisement features an image of the Nike fuel band with a voice over of an unknown athlete describing the product features of the band.	No

Table B-2. Description of the Replacement Advertisements

Appeal	Description of the Ad	Endorser (Y/N)
Informational	The commercial opens up with an image of LeBron James dressed out in his Miami Heat uniform. As he walks down the hallway to the gym, the camera zooms in on his shoes, and text appears on screen to describe the shoes' various attributes. The commercial is focused more on the shoes than LeBron, and is intended to provide consumers with information about the product.	Yes
Inspirational	A young man walks around the city in search a basketball court to train. A voice-over by the character can be heard saying the following things: "I am not a star. I don't want to be a star. The media have never heard of me. It's not about winning or losing. It's about reaching your limits, going as far as you can go and then going further..." As the voice-over plays, the commercial character trains hard, and works to improve his basketball game.	No

NOTE: These advertisements were selected as replacements based on the results of the expert panel

Table B-3. Results of the Pilot Test

Condition	<i>N</i>	Percentage of Correctly Identified Appeals
Non-Athlete/Informational	6	83.3%
Non-Athlete/Humorous	5	100%
Non-Athlete/Warm	5	100%
Non-Athlete/Inspirational	6	100%
Athlete/Informational	6	100%
Athlete/Humorous	6	83.3%
Athlete/Warm	5	100%
Athlete/Inspirational	7	100%

Table B-4. Results of the Manipulation Check

Condition	<i>N</i>	Percentage of Correctly Identified Appeals
Non-Athlete/Informational	41	86%
Non-Athlete/Humorous	41	90.2%
Non-Athlete/Warm	41	90.5%
Non-Athlete/Inspirational	46	89.4%
Athlete/Informational	44	82.3%
Athlete/Humorous	44	81.4%
Athlete/Warm	46	85.1%
Athlete/Inspirational	40	92.7%

Table B-5. Descriptive Statistics for the Non-Athlete/Informational Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	5.02	.923	.81	1.00										
2.Arousal	4.26	1.08	.77	.591**	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	6.01	1.06	.84	.335*	.508**	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	5.80	1.10	--	.616**	.512**	.451**	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	5.31	.941	.87	.349*	.234	.218	.192	1.00						
6.Expertise	5.64	.737	.83	.193	.274	.247	.117	.464**	1.00					
7.Likeability	5.53	.774	.71	.558**	.472**	.432**	.380*	.588**	.455**	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	6.29	.866	.92	.482**	.272	.431**	.613**	.335*	.180	.485**	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	6.36	.945	.96	.531**	.387*	.527**	.701**	.420**	.239	.599**	.872**	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.21	1.32	.97	.444**	.237	.292	.480**	.343*	.055	.512**	.537**	.668**	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	5.79	1.52	.97	.319*	.265	.306	.362*	.127	.044	.484**	.651**	.655**	.649**	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p<.05$; ** $p<.001$

Table B-6. Descriptive Statistics for the Non-Athlete/Humorous Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	4.81	.783	.73	1.00										
2.Arousal	4.27	1.05	.83	.259	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	5.45	1.10	.88	.293	.107	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	4.78	1.10	--	.270	.319*	.514**	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	5.17	.975	.81	.527**	.271	.282	.421**	1.00						
6.Expertise	4.71	.944	.89	.075	.133	.434**	.397*	.381*	1.00					
7.Likeability	4.94	.897	.73	.367*	.407**	.389*	.633**	.573**	.539**	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	5.59	.954	.91	.260	.137	.708**	.380*	.406**	.406**	.331*	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	5.95	1.01	.95	.029	.102	.575**	.275	.303	.303	.199	.766**	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.22	1.19	.95	-.032	-.058	.254	.108	.096	.356*	.146	.413**	.525**	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	5.68	1.34	.97	-.082	.118	.327*	.204	.050	.475**	.131	.451**	.515**	.557**	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-7. Descriptive Statistics for the Non-Athlete/Warm Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	5.36	.834	.81	1.00										
2.Arousal	3.59	.994	.74	.001	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	5.66	1.25	.87	.660**	.327*	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	5.02	1.38	--	.302	-.031	.249	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	5.33	1.26	.91	.636**	.340*	.643**	.341*	1.00						
6.Expertise	5.33	.868	.88	.269	.123	.210	.333*	.454**	1.00					
7.Likeability	5.73	1.12	.89	.720**	.295	.848**	.277	.715**	.233	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	5.81	1.32	.96	.613**	.169	.825**	.319*	.722**	.257	.807**	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	6.25	.875	.85	.396*	.177	.544**	.273	.386*	.229	.566**	.872**	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.47	.930	.96	-.027	.149	.075	.172	.045	.187	.112	.537**	.626**	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	6.07	.938	.97	.212	.080	.229	.312*	.156	.137	.343*	.651**	.546**	.592**	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-8. Descriptive Statistics for the Non-Athlete/Inspirational Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	4.60	.933	.73	1.00										
2.Arousal	4.31	.958	.76	-.169	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	6.01	.910	.83	.035	.459**	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	4.35	1.30	--	-.077	.298*	.210	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	5.42	.822	.81	.032	.345*	.535**	.491**	1.00						
6.Expertise	5.53	.958	.85	.053	.318*	.546**	.489**	.515**	1.00					
7.Likeability	5.57	.819	.78	.093	.119	.482**	.213	.488**	.417**	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	5.78	.927	.89	.090	.048	.040	.127	.091	-.011	-.251	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	6.28	.774	.93	.002	.105	.507**	.416**	.426**	.605**	.588**	.052	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.34	.985	.96	-.237	.027	-.112	-.015	.089	-.018	.204	.182	.196	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	5.75	1.35	.94	.016	.172	.435**	.309*	.320*	.458**	.373*	.015	.679**	-.025	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-9. Descriptive Statics for the Athlete/Informational Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	4.33	1.42	.78	1.00										
2.Arousal	3.99	1.30	.80	.651**	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	5.70	1.53	.91	.605**	.627**	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	4.48	1.45	--	.491**	.240	.398**	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	4.73	1.01	.83	.456**	.371*	.577**	.608**	1.00						
6.Expertise	6.15	.778	.94	.226	.173	.460**	.189	.371*	1.00					
7.Likeability	4.73	1.01	.80	.585**	.397**	.489**	.502**	.521**	.370*	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	5.65	1.42	.97	.439**	.409**	.742**	.559**	.724**	.404**	.606**	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	6.35	.785	.93	.475**	.320*	.542**	.272	.202	.226	.486**	.439**	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.41	1.07	.95	.163	.061	.385**	.228	.229	.322*	.283	.372*	.680**	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	5.82	1.59	.97	.215	-.009	.153	.197	.127	.124*	.185	.165	.419**	.521**	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-10. Descriptive Statistics for the Athlete/Humorous Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	4.60	.911	.73	1.00										
2.Arousal	3.43	1.03	.83	.460**	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	4.10	2.01	.88	.671**	.476**	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	4.00	1.36	--	.464**	.394**	.381*	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	4.31	.841	.80	.562**	.411**	.613**	.385**	1.00						
6.Expertise	4.60	1.25	.89	.508**	.463**	.605**	.245	.730**	1.00					
7.Likeability	4.44	1.07	.73	.709**	.522**	.644**	.443**	.699**	.769**	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	4.73	1.59	.91	.510**	.397**	.655**	.385**	.571**	.478**	.526**	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	5.92	1.01	.95	.203	.256	.402**	-.038	.396**	.424**	.253	.351*	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.25	1.20	.95	.146	.182	.346*	-.137	.153	.374*	.241	.206	.631**	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	5.95	1.42	.96	.137	.137	.262	-.223	.212	.399**	.202	.288	.582**	.843**	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-11. Descriptive Statistics for the Athlete/Warm Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	5.81	.736	.93	1.00										
2.Arousal	4.40	.902	.76	.344*	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	6.42	.581	.93	.544**	.211	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	4.63	1.56	--	.304*	.205	-.017	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	5.07	1.05	.91	.265	-.224	.352*	.351*	1.00						
6.Expertise	6.03	.852	.79	.439**	.058	.278	.361*	.310*	1.00					
7.Likeability	5.97	.909	.89	.677**	.155	.386**	.420**	.362*	.595**	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	6.15	.95	.94	.378**	.186	.413**	.057	.288	.243	.256	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	6.37	.932	.97	.442**	-.079	.496**	.040	.234	.429**	.556**	.029	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.41	1.00	.95	.466**	-.004	.465**	.062	.108	.519**	.452**	.346*	.560**	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	6.04	1.17	.93	.371*	.095	.436**	-.075	.222	.318*	.225	.549**	.409**	.542**	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p<.05$; ** $p<.001$

Table B-12. Descriptive Statistics for the Athlete/Inspirational Appeal

Construct	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Pleasure	4.21	1.12	.84	1.00										
2.Arousal	3.84	1.21	.85	.357*	1.00									
3.Ad Attitudes	5.80	.937	.79	.516**	.262	1.00								
4. Attractiveness	5.14	1.07	--	.300	.277	-.026	1.00							
5.Trustworthiness	4.58	1.35	.90	.464**	.008	.662**	.097	1.00						
6.Expertise	6.10	.846	.94	.170	.131	.516**	-.072	.575**	1.00					
7.Likeability	5.26	1.10	.74	.356*	.239	.660**	.219	.724**	.595**	1.00				
8.Endorser Attitudes (post)	5.54	1.05	.97	.372*	.158	.589**	.115	.624**	.243	.474**	1.00			
9.Brand Attitudes (post)	6.37	1.39	.96	.098	-.035	.512**	.087	.314*	.429**	.330*	.354*	1.00		
10.Purchase Intentions	6.62	.704	.91	.074	-.157	-.048	.070	.249	.519**	.163	-.111	.260	1.00	
11.WOM Intentions	5.99	1.34	.93	.010	-.135	.066	.138	.136	.318*	.106	-.119	.122	.452**	1.00

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-13. Results of One-Way ANOVAS using Advertising Appeal, Endorser Type, and Interaction as IVs, and Endorser Characteristics as DVs

Variable	Likeability			Expertise			Attractiveness			Trustworthiness		
	F	Sig.	η^2	F	Sig.	η^2	F	Sig.	η^2	F	Sig.	η^2
Advertising Appeal	21.06	.000**	.159	33.64	.000**	.232	5.57	.001**	.048	5.61	.001**	.048
Endorser Type	11.89	.001**	.034	17.59	.000**	.050	15.75	.000**	.045	17.55	.000**	.050
Interaction	4.21	.006**	.046	3.23	.022*	.028	4.95	.002**	.042	2.11	.099	.019

NOTE: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-14. Simple Main Effects for the Interaction of Advertising Appeal by Endorser Type on Likeability, Expertise, and Attractiveness

	Likeability		Expertise		Attractiveness	
	M	Sig.	M	Sig.	M	Sig.
Informational						
Athlete	4.77	.000**	6.15	.011*	5.80	.000**
Non-Athlete	5.53		5.64		4.47	
Inspirational						
Athlete	5.14	.041*	6.10	.004**	4.34	.437
Non-Athlete	5.57		5.53		4.57	
Warm						
Athlete	5.98	.209	6.03	.000**	5.02	.132
Non-Athlete	5.73		5.33		4.58	
Humor						
Athlete	4.43	.018*	4.60	.590	4.78	.008**
Non-Athlete	4.93		4.71		4.00	

NOTE: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table B-15. Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired-Comparison Results for the Effects of Advertising Appeals on Consumer Perceptions of the Endorser for the Entire Sample

Means and Standard Deviations				
	Likeability	Expertise	Attractiveness	Trustworthiness
Advertising Appeal				
1. Informational	5.14 ^a (1.00)	5.91 ^a (.796)	5.11 ^a (1.45)	5.03 ^{a,b} (.979)
2. Humorous	4.68 (1.02)	4.65 (1.11)	4.37 ^b (1.29)	4.73 ^a (1.00)
3. Warm	5.86 (1.01)	5.70 ^a (.923)	4.79 ^{a,b} (1.51)	5.20 ^b (1.15)
4. Inspirational	5.37 ^a (.962)	5.79 ^a (.947)	4.45 ^b (1.32)	5.34 ^b (.963)

NOTE: Higher scores on all variables represent more intense emotional responses. Means with the same letters are not statistically different ($p < .05$) based on Tukey's post-hoc tests.

Table B-16. Means, Standard Deviations, F-Values, Probability Levels, and Paired-Comparison Results for the Effects of Advertising Appeals on Pleasure and Arousal (Athlete Endorser Only)

Means and Standard Deviations		
	Pleasure	Arousal
Advertising Appeal		
1. Informational	4.34 ^{a,b,c} (1.42)	4.16 ^{a,b} (1.17)
2. Humorous	4.60 ^{a,b,c} (.911)	3.97 ^c (1.13)
3. Warm	5.81 (.736)	4.40 ^{a,b} (.902)
4. Inspirational	4.21 ^{a,b,c} (1.12)	3.85 ^{a,b,c} (1.21)
F-Values	20.71	6.65
Degrees of Freedom	3/170	3/170
P-value	.000**	.000**
Partial η^2	.268	.105

NOTE: Higher scores on all variables represent more intense emotional responses. Means with the same letters are not statistically different ($p < .05$) based on Tukey's post hoc tests.

Table B-17. Means, Standard Deviations, F-Values, Probability Levels, and Paired-Comparison Results for the Effects of Advertising Appeals on Consumer Perceptions of the Endorser (Athlete Endorser Only)

Means and Standard Deviations			
Advertising Appeal	Likeability	Expertise	Trustworthiness
1. Informational	4.73 (1.09)	6.15 ^a (.778)	4.77 ^b (.951)
2. Humorous	4.43 (1.07)	4.60 (1.25)	4.31 (.841)
3. Warm	5.97 (.909)	6.03 ^a (.852)	5.07 ^{a,b} (1.05)
4. Inspirational	5.26 (1.09)	6.10 ^a (1.14)	5.26 ^a (1.10)
F-values	18.70	26.98	7.442
Degrees of Freedom	3/170	3/170	3/170
P-value	.000**	.000**	.000**
Partial η^2	.248	.323	.116

NOTE: Higher scores on all variables represent more intense emotional responses. Means with the same letters are not statistically different ($p < .05$) based on Tukey's post-hoc tests.

Table B-18. Results of Multivariate Multiple Regression and Univariate Analyses for Influence of Predictor Variables on Respondents' Perceptions of the Endorser for the Humorous Appeal

Perceptions of the Endorser/Predictors	F	Adj. R ²	Beta	t-value	p-value
Likeability	14.53**	.386			
Attitude toward the Ad			.645	5.35	.000**
Endorser Image (pre)			-.013	-.113	.910
Attractiveness	3.67*	.110			
Attitude toward the Ad			.392	2.70	.010**
Endorser Image (pre)			-.084	-.581	.564
Trustworthiness	14.43**	.384			
Attitude toward the Ad			.587	4.85	.000**
Endorser Image			.195	1.62	.308
Expertise	12.65**	.351			
Attitude toward the Ad			.586	4.74	.000**
Endorser Image			.127	1.03	.308

NOTE: $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; Multivariate $F(8, 80) = 3.81$, $p = .01$

Table B-19. Results of Multivariate Multiple Regression and Univariate Analyses for Influence of Predictor Variables on Respondents' Perceptions of the Endorser for the Warm Appeal

Perceptions of the Endorser/Predictors	F	Adj. R ²	Beta	t-value	p-value
Likeability	3.80*	.110			
Attitude toward the Ad			.392	2.75	.009**
Endorser Image (pre)			-.038	-.268	.790
Attractiveness	.034	.000			
Attitude toward the Ad			-.010	-.069	.945
Endorser Image (pre)			-.036	-.238	.813
Trustworthiness	4.21**	.124			
Attitude toward the Ad			.322	2.28	.027*
Endorser Image			.201	1.43	.159
Expertise	2.61	.066			
Attitude toward the Ad			.283	2.16	.036*
Endorser Image			.084	3.05	.004**

NOTE: $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; Multivariate $F(8, 80) = 3.81$, $p = .01$

Table B-20. Results of Multivariate Multiple Regression and Univariate Analyses for Influence of Predictor Variables on Respondents' Perceptions of the Endorser for the Inspirational Appeal

Perceptions of the Endorser/Predictors	F	Adj. R ²	Beta	t-value	p-value
Likeability	16.96**	.450			
Attitude toward the Ad			.591	4.73	.000**
Endorser Image (pre)			.218	1.75	.088
Attractiveness	.244	.000			
Attitude toward the Ad			-.062	-.362	.719
Endorser Image (pre)			.117	.681	.500
Trustworthiness	21.61**	.513			
Attitude toward the Ad			.558	4.75	.000**
Endorser Image (pre)			.333	2.84	.007**
Expertise	6.89**	.232			
Attitude toward the Ad			.494	3.34	.002**
Endorser Image (pre)			.072	.488	.628

NOTE: $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; Multivariate $F(8, 68) = 5.34$, $p < .01$

Table B-21. Multiple Regression Analyses for the Humorous, Warm, and Inspirational Appeal.

Predictor Variables	Humorous			Warm			Inspirational		
	β	Sig.	t	β	Sig.	t	β	Sig.	t
Likeability	.167	.456	.752	.317	.047*	2.045	.075	.719	.363
Expertise	.050	.825	.222	.433	.007**	2.84	-.105	.550	-.603
Attractiveness	.162	.276	1.10	-.004	.492	-.029	.030	.830	.217
Trustworthiness	.356	.082	1.78	-.003	.977	.492	.626	.003**	3.17

NOTE: $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

R-square warm=.416

R-square inspirational=.398

Table B-22. Results of Multivariate Multiple Regression and Univariate Analyses for the Influence of Attitude toward the Endorser on Advertising Outcomes for the Warm Appeal

Advertising Outcomes/Predictors	F	Adj. R^2	Beta	t-value	p-value
Attitude toward Nike	13.31*	.214			
Attitude toward the Endorser			.482	3.64	.001**
Purchase Intentions	18.99**	.285			
Attitude toward the Endorser			.549	4.35	.000**
Intentions to spread positive WOM	13.31**	.119			
Attitude toward the Endorser			.373	2.66	.011**

NOTE: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; Multivariate $F(3, 42)=7.51$, $p < .01$